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ABSTRACT

A study examined the historical, cultural, social, pedagogical, and psychological factors affecting Chinese students' language learning styles and attitudes, particularly concerning learning English as a Second Language (ESL). The first section offers an overview of considerations in understanding the cultural background that students bring to the classroom (learning philosophy, learning styles, affective factors), and the second section extends this analysis to students in the Chinese culture. Educational philosophy and history and the current Chinese educational system are discussed. Aspects of learning style examined in this context include field independence, analytic learning, visual preference, orientation to closure, cooperative learning, left and right brain functions, and tolerance of ambiguity. Affective factors include self-esteem, inhibition, risk-taking, introversion, sensitivity, and anxiety. In the third section, results of a survey of Chinese students concerning their learning preferences are reported. The survey consisted of a questionnaire on language learning strategies, administered to 31 Chinese immigrants in southern California, and interviews with 21 Chinese individuals. Results are analyzed, with excerpts from subjects' responses used for illustration. Implications for ESL teachers are explored. The questionnaire, interview questions, and sample lessons from a Chinese primer are appended. Contains 50 references. (MSE)

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CHINESE STUDENTS' APPROACH TO LEARNING ENGLISH
PSYCHOLINGUISTIC AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the School of Intercultural Studies

Department of TESOL and Applied Linguistics

Biola University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in TESOL

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CHINESE STUDENTS' APPROACH TO LEARNING ENGLISH

PSYCHOLINGUISTIC AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

CHINESE STUDENTS' APPROACH TO LEARNING ENGLISH
PSYCHOLINGUISTIC AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES

Hongwei He

Chinese students have their own learning strategies and undergo certain emotional pressures in the process of learning English as a foreign language. This thesis examines the historical, cultural, social, pedagogical, and psychological factors that have affected Chinese students' learning styles and their feelings. The importance of understanding Chinese students' feelings is stressed and then some suggestions are given to Chinese and foreign teachers of English on how to balance the relationship between traditional pedagogies and current teaching methods.

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INTRODUCTION

Being Chinese myself and having taught English as a foreign language (EFL) to Chinese students for over seven years, I have gone through some of the joys and frustrations of being both an EFL learner and instructor. To my amazement, I have found that many other Chinese also share my experiences. I thought it would be interesting to investigate the factors which influence Chinese students' learning strategies and to find out what kind of emotional experiences they undergo in the process of EFL learning. This thesis is the result of such investigation.

ELT in China has a history of over one hundred years. However, it was not until the late 1970s that the population of English learners started to boom. China now claims to have the largest EFL learning population in the world, so it is necessary to get to know the Chinese students well and to provide them with current theoretical support. Only after we find out what kind of difficulties they face and what kind of emotions they experience in their learning are we able to adjust our instruction accordingly and create a pleasant learning environment for them.

In my readings I have found quite a few publications dealing with English language teaching (ELT) in China. Those publications report on studies made of the education system in China, of the Chinese culture, and of the learning strategies of the Chinese students. However, very few articles have analyzed Chinese students' affective variables in EFL learning. Language anxiety, as indicated by Young (1991), is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon. It is not easy to detect what kind of emotional feelings learners may have because such feelings vary depending on the students'

ethnicity, personality, past learning experiences, or learning environment. Nevertheless, affective variables are critical in predicting students' success in their language learning (Samimy & Tabuse, 1992).

To be objective in my survey, I tried not to show my personal views in conducting the interview and the questionnaire. In fact, most of the questionnaires were distributed and collected by my friends. In my interviews, I did not make any comment on the interviewees' responses, as I know any indication on my side would influence their opinion. I allowed them to express themselves freely with either brief or long answers. As a result, the length of interview varied greatly from five minutes up to thirty minutes.

In this thesis, I analyze Chinese students' learning preferences and their affective variables in learning English as a foreign language. Students' learning is not confined to a classroom setting. Their learning motivation and their learning attitude may be influenced by many factors such as culture, ethnicity, personality, family size, past learning experience, etc. Their learning strategies and emotional factors may, in turn, affect their progress. In Chapter One of this thesis I list various factors that may influence students' learning in general. In Chapter Two I focus mainly on Chinese students. I go behind the historical, social, educational, linguistic, and neurophysiological factors that have influenced the Chinese students and made them what they are. Chapter Three consists of two parts. Part one is the findings of the questionnaire broken down into ten small categories. Part two is an overview of the interview I conducted for this thesis. Some of the findings in the interview are of great interest. They are first hand data for looking into Chinese students' inner world, including their struggles in EFL learning. In Chapter Four, I provide some suggestions for Chinese teachers and foreign teachers.

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I. UNDERSTANDING OUR STUDENTS

Understand Students' Cultural Background

Learning Philosophy

Damen is right when she says that language learning is culture learning (Damen, 1986). That is especially true when we are dealing with students of other cultures. People of different cultures have different ideologies or beliefs. People of certain cultures have their set of norms or regulations; their ways of doing things, their ways of treating other people, their ways of expressing themselves, and even their ways of acquiring knowledge are different from other cultures. Their ideology is not formed in a single day. Rather, they learn what is acceptable and what the expectations of their community are through their personal experience, through the teachings of their parents, and through much observation and practicing in their daily life.

Information people receive from the environment around them such as things they hear, see, and read can also help to shape their beliefs. When people think their physical strength can be increased through exercising, they will try to promote sports in their publications, on their television shows, or even on their merchandise such as T-shirts and food boxes. Sports stars will be highly admired and many people in the nation will want to be successful in sports. The community has a strong impact on its people's creed (Damen, 1986).

All people have basic needs for food, shelter, and love. However, people of different cultures have different ways to meet their needs. Each people has its own value

system. A certain behavior may be proper in one culture, but it may not necessarily be acceptable in another culture. An Eskimo youth may show his respect towards an elderly sick person of his own tribe by helping to end his life. People in his culture think that the young man's deed is an act of respect because by doing so the old man does not have to suffer any more. However, an American young person would act differently in a similar situation. He or she would try to provide medication and whatever medical treatment is available to help the dear grandparent live longer. Sure enough, the sick person as well as the family members will be grateful for the young person's love. Nevertheless, we cannot say that the young Eskimo's love for his elder is less than that of the American. It just indicates that people of different cultures have different ways of showing their respect to their elders (Seelye, 1982).

Moreover, people of different cultures may not have the same view about education. In certain cultures, the aim of formal education is to train students to carry forward their tradition and to be obedient to their rulers. In other cultures, however, the purpose of education is to develop students' mental and physical abilities according to each individual's potential.

Accordingly, different education systems are set up to meet the need of different cultures. In the U. S., competition is the keynote in education. Schools recognize students through their academic achievements. Teachers encourage students to strive to be the winners in their studies. The losers face condemnation from the community, school, teachers, and even fellow students. Under such intense pressure, students resolve to work hard to be winners. Study becomes a competition against one another.

However, education is a different story in Japan. People in Japan believe that every normal child has the potential for success. Whether or not an individual achieves his or her goal depends largely on how much time and effort the person spends on his or

her work. In this sense, hard working students are considered good students. Parents and teachers appreciate those students who spend much time doing their studies. They believe that hard working students dare to meet the challenge in their studies. Those students will be successful both in their schools and in their future life.

Teachers' and students' concept of education will surely affect their classroom behavior. Research shows that Asian teachers tend to be more teacher-centered because their idea of learning is more or less the traditional way of learning. In their teaching, they like to spend much time providing instruction and leave very little time for classroom activities. In the West, on the other hand, teachers often act as counselors in the classroom. They encourage students to think creatively and critically. They give students the opportunities to raise questions and to express themselves. Asian students, however, rely heavily on teachers for instruction. In their minds, teachers are their main source of information. To them, learning is a process by which knowledge is passed from teachers to the students. The students' role in learning is that of passive recipients. In class, Asian students are far less active than Hispanic and other Western students would be.

Attitude Toward English

Research shows that learners' attitude toward the target language affects their learning. A positive attitude has been shown to facilitate the learners' learning process. When learners believe that knowing the target language will benefit them, they work hard on their studies and are willing to practice and use that language as much as they can (Baker, 1992).

Although English has become a world language, people's attitude towards it may vary depending on the development of their region and the relationship between their country and the English speaking nations. Even though English is not the official

language in Thailand, it is very popular all over the country. English is now a required course in middle schools, in universities, and even in vocational schools. Being able to communicate with English speakers, enriching their knowledge, getting a better job, and competing with foreigners in the labor market are some of the reasons people in Thailand give for learning English. So one may say that most Thai people learn English with an instrumental motivation. School administrators and teachers learn English to enrich their knowledge. College students learn English to get a good job after graduation. Workers learn English hoping to be more competitive in the international job market. English language schools have sprouted up everywhere in Thailand. People with English skills are in high demand in the development of modern Thailand (Mckay, 1992).

In India, due to the country's complicated past and present situation, English plays a special role in smoothing interethnic conflicts and in the development of the country's national economy. English used to be the colonial language during the English colonial period. After India's independence in 1947 some people tried to ban English -- the colonial language -- and set up Hindi to be the national language. However, as India is a multi-lingual, multi-cultural nation, many other ethnic groups also wanted to have their languages to be the official language. Interethnic conflicts thus arose. Under these special circumstances, English is used as a compromise to solve the conflicts. In fact, English is used at all levels in India today -- from government to schools, from newspapers to Civil services. McCrum, Cran, and MacNeil are right when they say, "There are now more speakers of English in India than in Britain" (1986). Not only is English the most important means of intercommunication for the scientific community in India, but it is also a necessity in the common people's daily life such as getting a government job, choosing a wife, etc. Being able to speak English is a symbol of being well educated and it is something worth showing off. Girls who can speak English are more attractive to young men because the men want to be able to take their wives to

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various social activities. They will be much admired if their wives can communicate in English (McCrum, et al., 1986; Trugill, 1974).

Learners' Expectations

Students of different cultures have different expectations of their teachers. They base their expectations on their understanding about language learning, on their view about education, and on their learning experiences. When people of a certain culture think that language learning is a serious and pains-taking process, students of that culture will be inclined to expect their teachers to have full control of their learning process. They want their teachers to guide them through every stage of their learning. For example, people in Japan have a clear distinction between different class status and generations. People of a lower social status should never offend those above them. Influenced by their culture, Japanese students expect their teachers to play a central role in their teaching. Students pay respect to their teachers by listening to the teachers quietly and attentively. They seldom raise questions when the class is in session. All children are taught not to interrupt others, especially people who are their seniors or who are of higher authority. One way to show such respect to them is to do as one is told.

Religion is an inseparable part of the life of Islamic people. Firmly planted in the head of Muslim people is the doctrine that people should be submissive to Allah. They believe in Allah's guidance and refrain from giving their opinions or making decisions. Once we know this part of the Islamic culture, it will not surprise us to see that Islamic students are not good at doing critical analysis in their studies. They are more comfortable with paraphrasing and summary writing, as those jobs do not require students to give their personal opinions.

Unlike Japanese and Islamic students, American students think language learning can be fun and enjoyable even though it is hard. They enjoy talking to their Hispanic

neighbors with the Spanish they learned at school. Using French to communicate with French people is part of the fun during their tour to Europe. When it comes to the language classroom, they are not satisfied with teachers telling them grammar rules and word meanings. They want teachers to create some life-like situations for them to practice using the target language. Students prefer interpersonal activities such as pair work or group discussion. Those activities have a relaxed learning atmosphere and provide students more opportunities to practice in the target language (Damen, 1986).

Language Learning Experiences

In their teaching, teachers should also take students' past language learning experiences into consideration, especially with adult learners. Some students may not be comfortable with a communicative approach if they have learned a second or foreign language in the past and the instructional methods they have gone through are mainly traditional. It may take them a while to feel at ease in the communicative learning environment, as they are so used to playing a passive role in the language classroom. In those students' minds, teachers are knowledge providers. Teachers do most of the talking in class. They tell students what to do, what to memorize. Those students' conception of learning is memorizing new words and grammar rules, doing tests and text translation. They do not know what to do when they are given much self-study time. They may even think it is a waste of time to do group discussion or role play. They do not feel as if they have learned anything unless they have something written on paper. Teachers should not rush their learning theories upon those students too soon, nor should they suggest that those students' learning methods are not acceptable. That may harm the students' self-confidence and motivation (Tarone & Yule, 1989).

Instead, teachers can ask students to reflect on their past language learning experiences, either pleasant or unpleasant. They can then have students analyze their

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successful or unsuccessful experiences and thus find out the factors that influenced their learning and made their learning enjoyable or uncomfortable. Also, teachers can have students share their stories with their classmates. In this way, they will know what learning strategies students have been exposed to and feel comfortable with. Based on this, teachers can make necessary adjustments in their curriculum. Students can also benefit from each other's learning experience. They may learn and try out strategies they have never heard of before.

Understand Students' Learning Styles

Different persons perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment differently. Each individual employs a different approach in his or her language learning process. Each learner's learning preferences are the unconscious result of the individual's culture traits, past learning experiences, and personality. Once they are formed, they are relatively stable. According to Reid, students from different cultures show a considerable difference in their preference for learning styles (Reid, 1987).

Field Independence and Field Dependence

Field independence refers to those language learners who rely more on themselves and less on others or the environment for receiving and processing information. In their learning, field independent learners tend to isolate details or elements of the given information. On the other hand, field dependence is the style used by the learners who view the entire information as a whole. In their learning process they are easily influenced by other people and by the learning environment. However, there is no clear cut dividing line between field independence and field dependence. It is more like a

continuum. We may find that some language learners use both styles in their studies and are simply inclined more to the dependent or independent end.

Field independent learners seem to do better in a traditional language class, which does not require the learners to do much talking. In their studies, field independent learners go to fine details by breaking down the information into bits and pieces. This style is helpful in dealing with rule-governed information and with data that requires more analytical skills. However, field dependent learners may do better in a natural language learning situation, since it requires much interactive skill in doing face to face communication. Field dependent learners normally have good social awareness such as eye-contact and reading body language. Those skills are very important in language learning and usage. Research in the field of language study indicates that both field independent and field dependent styles are equally helpful in foreign and second language learning (Brown, 1994; Richards, 1978).

Analytic and Global Learning

Analytic and global are another pair of learning styles often used by language learners. Analytic learning is detail-oriented while global is holistic. Analytic learners tend to go into very specific details in their studies. They like to do grammar analysis in their readings -- find out all the grammar rules in each sentence. They want to know the formation, the function, and the part of speech of each word or phrase before they go on to the next sentence in their reading. They focus on the regulations and structures of the language rather than on the meaning. They will not be content unless they find out the exact meaning of a new word. Most of the time, they do not like to guess the meaning of a new word from the context because they are afraid they may go astray or fail to get the precise meaning of the word. Analytic learners are not very good at interactive activities such as group discussion and cooperating with peers.

Contrary to analytic learners, global learners are too impatient to go into many details in their studies. Exercises such as analyzing the grammatical function of a sentence or finding out the meaning or usage of certain words may frustrate them. They feel they have learned everything when they know the general meaning of the passage they are reading, and they are looking forward to doing something new. If they do not know the meanings of certain words, they will guess from the context rather than looking them up in the dictionary. Giving the main idea of a passage or retelling a story in their own words are their favorite exercises.

Generally, analytic learners perform well in tests involving grammatical analysis and other detailed items. However, when it comes to oral presentation and free writing, global learners outdo analytic learners. Again, a combination of these two learning styles is necessary in language learning. Language teachers need to find ways to balance their students' analytic and global learning behavior (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Shrum & Glisan, 1993).

Auditory and Visual Preference

For visual-oriented learners, information has to be seen by their eyes before they understand or memorize it. They will find it hard to follow the teacher in class if instructions are given verbally. To them, listening to a tape-recorded story is not as effective as reading the story in a book. Learners with visual preference will be able to process the related information better if pictures or real objects are presented. So teachers have to be careful when dealing with these students. Having assignments or important summary information written on the board or on handouts is a good solution. Teachers cannot just give their lectures orally all the time or do conversational exercises and role playing without having instructions written down for the students.

Auditory learners have sharp hearing. They can pick up things simply by hearing them once or twice. They enjoy discussion, debating, role playing and other kinds of verbal interaction. However, auditory learners may have a difficult time doing writing assignments.

Hands-on learners do well when they work with real objects. Their sense of touch is exceptionally sensitive. Things they feel with their hands will leave a deep impression on them. Realia, flashcards, and models are good instructional aids for these students. They like to move around a lot. Sitting still for a long time is a torture to them.

Language learning and teaching research finds a correlation between learners' cultural background and their sensory preferences. Generally, Asian students tend to be visual-oriented and most Hispanic students are auditory-oriented (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Shrum & Glisan, 1993).

Orientation to Closure

In language learning, orientation to closure means the learners lack flexibility when dealing with unknown information in the target language. Closure-oriented learners expect every aspect of the target language to fit the regulations of that language. They have a strong desire for clarity. They will not be satisfied until they find an answer to every language phenomenon. Exceptions to rules in the target language bother them a lot because they often get confused by irregular patterns of spelling, pronunciation, and usage. Activities such as informal discussion and role play will not suit them. Most of the closure learners are very diligent. They do their assignments carefully and neatly. They are so enthusiastic about their studies that they spend long hours doing their reading or making a vocabulary list.

Learners who are less closure-oriented are called open students. Unlike closure learners, open students do not care much about regulations in the language system.

Language learning for them is a kind of enjoyable activity. They like lively discussions and often throw themselves into different kinds of language games. They do not seem to worry themselves much about assignment deadlines, and they do not take testing scores as seriously as closure learners. Nevertheless, their communication skills are better than those of closure learners, and they can express themselves clearly in the target language.

It is good to mix closure and open students in a group so they can learn from each other. Open students can learn how to put more conscious effort into their studies from closure students, and closure students need to know how to be open to more new information and to be relaxed in their studies. A mixture of closure and open students can also create a nice learning environment -- the classroom atmosphere will not be too noisy (out of control) nor too quiet (no student volunteers to answer the teacher's questions) (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Shrum & Glisan, 1993).

Competitive and Cooperative Learning

Competitive learners view other students in class as their opponents and they resolve to outdo them in their studies. Their motivation in studies is to compete against their classmates and try to be the winners. A certain degree of competition is necessary in language learning. It encourages students to work hard and to do well in their studies. Competition also forces students to budget their time wisely and to adopt the learning strategies that work best for them. However, competition can sometimes lead to anxiety which in turn will hinder students' progress. If an individual fails in a test, he or she may become despondent and give up. In their studies, competitive learners tend to rely on their own efforts. They may turn away from social and cooperative learning activities. Competitive learning can also cause some other psychological effects such as fear of failure, solitariness, and individualism.

Cooperative learners are concerned more about group achievement than individual accomplishment. They make sure everyone in the group is doing well in his or her studies. They enjoy socialized activities such as group discussion, role play, etc., because those activities require the joint efforts of each member in the group. Cooperative learning gives the students the opportunities to learn from each other. They can share their learning experiences. Slower students may benefit from cooperative learning by getting help and encouragement from other students in the group. By helping others, advanced students can also learn how to make themselves understood in the target language and how to become aware of others' thoughts and feelings. Their motivation and self-esteem will increase at the same time.

Again, culture traits can be found in learners' cooperative or competitive preferences. Most American students are competitive learners. The American education system encourages students to compete against one another. School administrators, teachers, and the community give great honor to the few top students. Americans value competition and the do-it-yourself approach to life. Personal achievement is highly emphasized. Contrary to this is the Asian people's value system. For example, the Japanese stress the value of conformity to or identity with the group. They insist upon the insignificance of the individual and place group harmony above personal achievement (Damen, 1986; Shrum & Glisan, 1993).

Left and Right Brain Function

Neurolinguists believe that different parts of the brain have different functions in the course of the language learning process. For example, the left hemisphere is related to logic, data, number, and analytic reasoning whereas the right hemisphere controls the emotions and the visual and auditory images. Studies in second and foreign language learning also show that left-brain or right-brain dominant learners behave differently in

their learning. Left-brain dominant learners are more comfortable with deductive learning. They infer certain rules or regulations of the language system from many language phenomena they come across. They have no difficulty memorizing new words and grammar usage. They are analytic readers and know how to give a good summary of the thing they have read. They do things in a well-organized manner and like to arrange various pieces of information into different categories.

Unlike left-brain dominant learners, right-brain dominant learners employ the inductive way of thinking. In the language learning process, these learners gather samples used in various situations and then induce a general rule which explains the language in use. They have a strong visual sense, and they enjoying using pictures and real objects in their learning. What they read and write will easily create images in their mind and the images help them to memorize things they learn. Right-brain dominant people are very sensitive to their environment. They show their feelings easily and have good artistic expression.

Tolerance and Intolerance of Ambiguity

Tolerance or intolerance of ambiguity is another contrasting pair of cognitive styles in second or foreign language learning. The terms refer to the degree of tolerance learners can endure in a confusing circumstance. In other words, they indicate whether learners are willing to accept or refuse innovation. In a second or foreign language learning situation, learners may often encounter customs, regulations, or value systems that are different from their own. There are also many inconsistencies within the target language itself such as the exceptions in pronunciation, spelling, and language usage. Learners with tolerance of ambiguity are more open to things that are not congruent with what they have known. They get along pretty well with seemingly contradictory or irrelevant information.

Learners who are intolerant of ambiguity are somewhat close-minded to ideas that are not in accordance with their value system. They can only accept what is similar to things they are familiar with. When something in the target culture does not fit their structure of knowledge, they will find it hard to appreciate it. So these people are easily disturbed by ambiguous items in the target language. Even some of the controversial phenomena in the target language may confuse them. Open-minded people do not have these problems. They are tolerant of new and uncertain information. They are more willing to challenge unexpected or contradictory situations. Nevertheless, open-minded people have the tendency to swallow all information without putting forth any effort to analyze it. Studies in the field of language learning show that a certain degree of tolerance of ambiguity is necessary in learning a second or foreign language. As there is not always a clear or satisfactory answer to every language phenomenon, learners need to be able to put up with some seemingly contradictory explanations. If learners spend too much time on every language phenomenon, they are not likely to advance very fast. Similarly, learners with a carefree manner will make many mistakes in spelling and usage (Brown, 1994; Damen, 1986).

Understand Students' Affective Factors

Affective factors have to do with a person's feelings about himself or toward others in various social interactions. Human feeling is an intricate thing. According to Bloom and his colleagues (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964), there are five levels of affectivity, the first of which is information receiving. As people interact with others in a given situation, they will be exposed to various data. At this level, each individual has the option of either directing his or her attention to the data or ignoring them. At the second level, if individuals choose to accept the information, they will react or respond to

it. The responding may be positive or negative, strong or weak. For instance, individuals may be interested in the person or thing they have met and want to know more about that person or thing. At the third level, individuals place value on the person or thing according to his or her own value system. When individuals find there is value in something, they will strive for it. The fourth level of affectivity is to organize various data according to each individual's belief system. At this level, individuals seek out how one value is related to another value and to their belief. The final level of affectivity is called self-realization. Individuals come to the understanding that their thinking and behavior are in accordance with their value system. Only at this level, it is possible for them to approach problems according to their established system (Brown, 1994).

Research in the field of second and foreign language learning shows that learners' emotional responses have a very important impact on their learning. So it is especially important for language teachers to understand students' feelings and to find out the various reasons for their emotional reactions.

Self-esteem

To many students, learning a second or foreign language is a great challenge, especially when they are not sure if they can learn it well. No doubt learners who believe they have the ability to learn the language well are more likely to succeed than those who do not have the confidence. Self-esteem and success contribute to one another. Success in learning helps to increase one's self-esteem. In turn, high self-esteem reduces learners' timidity and anxiety. It helps learners to remain calm and give full play to their learning ability. If students have done well in their tests or oral performances, they feel happy and encouraged. They know they have the ability to learn the language well. Next time they will not be so frightened to answer the teacher's questions in class; they will be able to focus more in their tests.

It is not hard for a teacher to tell how much confidence a student has. Learners with high self-esteem behave differently from those with low self-esteem. The former tend to be more active in class. They ask more questions and do more self-monitoring in their speaking. Low self-esteem learners show more hesitation in classroom participation. They need more encouragement and compliments.

Heyde (1977) believes that the teachers' classroom behavior has a strong impact on students' self-esteem. Studies done by her show that students' test scores will drop if teachers put too much pressure on students with low self-esteem by asking them to monitor their speech or by correcting students regularly on their language performance. Perhaps this is because students' target language skills are not good enough for them to monitor their own speech, or too much correction makes students too timid to express themselves freely. Correcting a student's mistakes in front of the class will surely put the student in an awkward position, and sometimes this may hurt the student's self-esteem. Indirect correction of student's errors in target language performance such as repeating the question in its original wording a few times when the student fails to provide a proper answer to the question may also harm the student's feelings. Psychologically, the teacher's repetition is a threat to the student and the student's self-confidence drops down dramatically. The student knows there must be something wrong with his or her answer when the teacher repeats the question. The pressure on the student gets higher each time the teacher repeats that question. Naturally the teacher has no intention of putting down the student, and it is fair to let the student hear the question twice if the student has not understood it the first time. However, the teacher needs to change his or her tone or rephrase the question to make it easier for the student to understand. The teacher's approval and positive comment will be an encouragement to the students and will help to reinforce students' self-esteem (Allwright & Bailey, 1991).

Inhibition

Human beings develop a set of defenses to protect themselves as they approach unfamiliarity. When we communicate with people we do not know, we feel uneasy and we do not like to tell the others much about ourselves. This is called inhibition. Inhibition prevents us from expressing ourselves freely. In a second or foreign language learning situation, learners are facing much uncertainty. To mention a few, the teacher's expectations, other students' judgment, the new language system and the new culture -- all these are threats to language learners. Experiments by linguists Guiora, et al. (as cited in Brown, 1994) show that alcohol or other chemical relaxants help to lower language learners' inhibition. Relaxants enable learners to perform better in pronunciation tests and communicate more freely. Brown suggests that a relaxed learning environment can have the effect of certain tranquilizers to lower students' inhibition. If teachers get to know their students better and try to make friends with their students, the block between teacher and student will be removed. Students' inhibition will drop to the lowest degree when teachers create a relaxed learning atmosphere by adapting authentic materials or by using unthreatening approaches such as the Silent Way in their teaching. A relaxed learning environment will surely facilitate learning. Students will participate actively in classroom activities and their learning capacity will be expanded. That does not mean students will not make mistakes in their learning. However, they will not be hindered by their mistakes because they know mistakes are inevitable in their learning process. They will not try to defend their egos by keeping silence in order not to make mistakes.

Risk-taking

Second or foreign language learning requires some venture: prediction, guessing, or inference. Some learners are too shy to take any adventure. For fear of making mistakes, they will not speak in the target language unless they are pretty sure what they

are saying is correct. Naturally, those students will miss many chances for practice to improve their skills in the target language. Contrary to these are students who are too outspoken. They jump at every opportunity and speak out recklessly. They do not care if their answer is relevant to the occasion or not.

In language learning, high-risk-taking students are more likely to succeed. However, those bold and carefree students are more likely to make mistakes. Teachers should warn them and prepare them for the consequence of being wrong, failing in a test, or losing face in front of others. There are times when they only receive a blank look from the listener or a burst of laughter from their classmates. Sometimes they may feel embarrassed or even ridiculous when approaching someone in the target language. At least those students have tried. They will surely go on even though they may make mistakes, and hopefully they will not make the same mistakes again next time. If students just keep quiet all the time to avoid making mistakes, they will not be able to make much progress in their second or foreign language. Language learners can only find the proper usage of an expression by trying it out and seeing if it is acceptable in the target language or culture. Certain patterns of errors may develop in their interlanguage or they may plateau if they are too shy to speak out in the target language. Language teachers ought to let students know that errors are common in the language learning process. Students should not be concerned too much about making errors. Instead, they should participate in different kinds of language learning activities. Trying and then making errors is more profitable than not trying at all. Teachers should encourage students to do some guessing and prediction in their studies. Such cognitive learning strategies require students to be involved in their learning activity (Brown, 1994; Oxford, 1990).

Extroversion and Introversion

People have the tendency to think that extroverted individuals are talkative and open-minded while introverted people are relatively shy, reserved, or reluctant. Such understanding is not necessarily correct even though many Westerners have a special favor for extroverted people. The fact is, according to Brown (1994), extroverted individuals are insecure and low in self-esteem deep down in their heart of hearts. They talk more and make more noises in order to draw other people's attention or to gain recognition from other people. They need other people's compliments to feel good and secure. Introverted individuals, though not as talkative as extroverted people, have more self-confidence. They always want to make sure that what they are saying is to the point. They will not act recklessly, but rather think carefully before they act. They appear to be reluctant or slow in giving answers. It is not because they do not know the answer or are slow in thinking, but that they have to verify the answer in their mind before giving it out.

Willingness to talk and to participate in class activities is helpful in foreign or second language learning. Many language teachers like extroverted learners because they help to create an active learning environment. However, teachers should not judge their students simply by how much they talk. Some teachers may have the tendency to think that extroverted students are better language learners since language learning requires much oral participation. Such thinking, however, may be misleading. Introverted students may have more inner strength than extroverted students. Their behavior pattern is shaped by their culture norms. In certain cultures it is considered rude to speak too much in class. A talkative student will be understood as a person who likes to show off his or her knowledge. Students should pay respect to the teacher by being quiet in class. Language teachers need to be aware of the students' cultural background.

Once they find out which students are introverted and which are extroverted, teachers have the responsibility to let students know the importance of oral participation

in language class. Teachers need to encourage introverted students to speak more in their learning. Many introverted students perform better in their written work than in their speaking. More oral participation will certainly help to speed up these students' language learning process (Brown, 1994).

Empathy

In order to better understand other people's feelings or state of mind, we need to place ourselves in other people's position. This emotional understanding process is called empathy. Empathy is an important element in communication. The speaker needs to study and understand the listener's state of mind if he or she wants to get the message across. At the beginning of a conversation, the addresser has to assume what the addressee's state of mind is, and then the addresser delivers his or her message. If the message does not get across, we know that the addresser's presumption is wrong. In that case, the addresser has to adjust his or her presumption by changing the topic or manner of delivery in order to start the conversation.

Empathy plays an important role in second or foreign language learning and teaching. First of all, the language itself is complicated enough for learners. Then there are other factors related with the target language such as the new culture and the new learning environment. There is also the issue of learning other people's feelings and state of mind. All these may place language learners in a dismal mood. In this respect, teachers ought to put themselves in the shoes of their students. It is necessary that teachers learn something about their students' cultural background. Teachers may try to find out how their students think about learning and how their educational systems affect their cognitive styles. That will help teachers to prepare and present their lessons acceptably to students of different cultures.

Language learners, on the other hand, also need to know the target culture. By understanding the target culture, learners will be able to comprehend what they read and hear better. Students will know what topic is appropriate in a given situation. Students need to be aware of other people's thoughts and feelings when they are communicating in the target language. Through readings and interacting with people of the target culture students will have a good understanding of the target culture and eventually develop their empathy with the target people. Good language learners have a desire to learn about and to assimilate themselves in the target culture. Integrative motivation is a sure step toward success in language learning.

Anxiety

Language teachers notice that some students may sometimes behave peculiarly when they are anxious. According to language experts (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Horwitz & Young, 1991; Young, 1991), a little bit of anxiety is necessary in language learning because it helps to keep students alert and serves as a stimulus to urge students to do well in their studies. However, too much anxiety prevents students from performing naturally and thus hinders their learning. Anxiety is a common phenomenon in second or foreign language learning. Language teachers need to observe carefully how students behave in a given situation. If students behave strangely as a result of anxiety, teachers then need to find out the cause of students' anxiety and try to deal with it. It is not hard to detect students' peculiar behavior arising from anxiety. Leary (as cited in Young, 1991) groups students' various behaviors related to anxiety into three categories: arousal-mediated responses, disaffiliate behavior, and image-protection behavior.

Teachers may notice students walk timidly into the classroom and squirm in their seats or play with their hair, pens, or other objects. When speaking, they stammer or speak incoherently. These nervous behaviors are called arousal-mediated responses. If

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anxiety gets more intense, disaffiliate behavior appears. Students try to get away from social interaction. In class, they sit quietly and show no interest in participating in any kind of language learning activities. They are reluctant to answer teacher's or other person's questions. If unavoidable, they will give brief responses. Signs of fear may be observed in the conversation or speech of these students. The other kind of anxiety categorized by Leary is image-protection. Nervous students want to protect their self-image by smiling or nodding their head while listening to others. They seldom interrupt others in a conversation, but give frequent verbal feedback such as "uh-huh" or "yeh, yeh." Some may even laugh loudly to show that they are enjoying the conversation. The fact is, these students are frightened to communicate with others in the target language. They keep the conversation going because they do not want to lose face or hurt another person's feelings.

Beside the above mentioned symptoms, the following strange behaviors of language learners may also be related to anxiety: avoiding eye contact with the teacher, avoiding speaking in the target language in and outside of class, coming unprepared to class, postponing taking a language class until another term, and other evasive activities.

The next job for language teachers is to find out the sources of students' anxiety. What makes learners act so abnormal? According to psychologists, human beings may undergo anxiety when they are encountering some kind of evolution, when the situation is unfamiliar to them, when there are ambiguities, when there is suspicion, or when they experience something unhappy (Daly, 1991). In second or foreign language learning, students face two kinds of challenges. The first challenge comes from the unfamiliarity of the target language, culture and environment, and the teacher's teaching style and expectations. The other challenge comes from the students themselves: their personality, their self-confidence, their knowledge about the target language and culture, and their language learning experience.

When we talk about anxiety, we often think of shyness, stage fright, communication apprehension, and low self-esteem. These behaviors are closely related to personal or interpersonal factors. Lack of self-confidence and high competitiveness will surely cause anxiety to language learners. Some people are born timid. It would frighten them greatly if the teacher asked them to act on stage or to speak in front of the class. Anxiety occurs when reality is in conflict with the learners' belief. If learners cannot reach the learning level they have expected, say, to speak fluently in the target language in two years, there will be anxiety. Learners' belief about language learning may also cause anxiety. If learners regard correct grammar usage as important in successful language learning, they will be concerned a lot about grammar rules in their speaking and writing. What is more, teacher's beliefs about language teaching can also cause anxiety in the learners. Research in second and foreign language learning (Wright, 1987) shows that teacher-centered traditional language teaching creates more anxiety than learner-based instruction. Teachers will do most of the talking when they think that their role in a language class is like a master who supervises their students and their activities. They expect students to take a passive role in learning. In their mind, good students are those who are quiet in class, who are listening attentively to teachers, and who are doing just what teachers want them to do. In a teacher-centered class, students do not have much opportunity to use the target language or to express their ideas freely. So whenever they are called on to do something in class, they will feel nervous.

Teacher-student interaction can also cause anxiety to language learners. Teachers' classroom behaviors, such as their manner in presenting materials and in correcting students' errors contributes a lot to language anxiety. Not that students do not want teachers to correct their errors, but that the harsh manner teachers sometimes use in correcting causes too much tension. Many students express their concerns about teachers

pointing out their mistakes in front of their peers. That makes them feel as if they look foolish and silly (Buck, 1992).

The next source of language anxiety is associated with classroom procedures. Students feel nervous when they are called upon to speak or read in the target language in front of the class. Most students feel uneasy about giving an oral presentation before an audience. Even answering the teachers' questions in the target language may cause a certain degree of tension for students. In order to reduce students' anxiety, teachers can have students practice more in a small group before asking them to speak in class.

Language testing is another important factor related to anxiety. First, there is an element of competition in each test. Students either fear that they may fail in the test or that they do not do as well as others in the test. Secondly, the ambiguity or similarity in the test entries may also cause anxiety. Students do not know what to be judged on or what is expected in the test. Before the test, they have to go over every detail in their texts, notes, and returned assignments for fear they may miss something. While taking the test, they have to face the pressure of time and the pressure of making the right choice between two or more similar items. Then, there is the anxiety caused by unfamiliarity. Students' tension may increase if they find out the materials or grammar usage in the test is different from what they have learned. Students' anxiety and confusion are inevitable if teachers use the communicative approach in their teaching, but many of the test items are about grammar usage. Finally, the bias in tests can also produce anxiety in students. Students may find it hard to overcome certain culture barriers. They may think the test is not fair if it fails to consider learners' cultural values and their emotional status. Tests should fairly reflect learners' cultures, their peoples, and the importance of their languages (Samimy & Tabuse, 1992; Horwitz & Young, 1991; Krashen 1987; Oller, 1979).

2. UNDERSTANDING CHINESE STUDENTS

It is true that all language learners share something in common. However, learners of different cultures, influenced by their value system, by their geographical environment, by their learning philosophy, and by their learning experiences, have different understanding about and approach to learning a second or foreign language. Here, let us look briefly at some of the major factors that influence the Chinese students' personality and learning styles.

Cultural Background

EFL in China -- A Brief History

For thousands of years, China was a closed country. The Chinese called their country *Zhongguo* (中國) -- "the central kingdom"-- because they thought their culture and nation was the best of all in the world. For this reason, the Chinese had a sense of superiority over other nations. They considered their nation to have the longest history, and the Chinese language was used by more people than any other language. In fact, Chinese was widely used in the past. Japan, Vietnam, and many other Asian nations either used or adapted Chinese into their languages. Even today, there are over 50 government-recognized minority nationalities in China, and each group speaks a different language. Nevertheless, they all use Mandarin Chinese as their written language. As a result, the Chinese thought it would be ridiculous for them to learn the languages of other inferior nations.

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It was not until the Opium War in 1840 when the Chinese were defeated by England and in 1900 when the Eight Alien Nations[1] invaded China and burned down the Yuan Ming Palace that the Chinese began to realize that China was no longer the strongest nation in the world. Since then the Chinese have had to adopt a different attitude toward other cultures and languages. Missionaries started coming into China in the 19th century. Learning and teaching English as a foreign language in China started out mainly with schools operated by Western missionaries. Texts and other learning materials were introduced directly from the missionaries' native countries, and instruction was in English. Students had much contact with English both in and outside class. Missionary teachers taught students practical usage in English, and thus the students' English skills developed rapidly.

In order to defend the nation from the invasion of imperialists and to develop the country's economy, China needed to learn to use the advanced technology of the Western countries. In spite of the resistance of the conservative nationalists, progressive Chinese urged that China should open its door. As China's trading with foreign countries increased, more and more Chinese, especially young Chinese, wanted to learn English. However, the methods they used in learning English were similar to those they used to learn Ancient Chinese. There was much memorization of words and grammar rules, many drills, and much word to word translation. Many students could hardly say anything in English after graduation. However, graduates from mission schools had relatively better English skills. They were fluent in both speaking and writing because they had more exposure to English, and their missionary teachers used syllabuses closely related to their daily life. As a result, mission school graduates found well-paid jobs in business companies and banks, or working as teachers or interpreters.

In 1911, the Republic of China was founded, and a warlord period started. The civil war among different warlords was followed by the Anti-Japanese War (1938-1945)

and the war between the Nationalists and the Communists (1946-1949). It was impossible to operate any school smoothly in such an unstable situation. In fact, EFL learning and teaching had practically ceased during that period.

The People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. The Communist Party wanted everything to be controlled by the Communist Central Government. Therefore, the Party launched one movement after another during the following ten years to consolidate its power over the entire country. The Land Reform Movement (1951-1952) which assigned lands formerly owned by rich people to the poor won the favor of the poor peasants. Then there were the "Three Anti's[2]" (1951-1952), the "Five Anti's[3]" (1952), the "Thought Reform" (1952), and the "Fight America and Help Korea" (1950-1953) movements. During that time, all private businesses were confiscated by the government. Private schools became public, and all educational institutions were under the control of the Ministry of Education. In English language teaching, teachers were asked to reform their thoughts by abandoning feudalism and bureaucratic ideology and accepting socialist ideas in their teaching.

The years from 1951 to 1956 were the period in which China learned from its socialist elder brother, Soviet Russia. China followed the model of the Soviet Union in its early stage of development. In the Chinese government leaders' mind, everything from the Soviet Union was good, and everything from the Western world was bad. Treaties between China and the Soviet Union were signed, and the Soviets agreed to give economic and technical aid to China. Soviet experts came to China to give technical help and general guidance. Demand for English dropped rapidly, and naturally Russian became the major foreign language in all schools. Many English teachers turned to teach Russian since there was a shortage of Russian teachers. There were only a few institutions that had English courses. Even though graduates who majored in English were so few compared to those who majored in Russian, they had little chance of finding

jobs related to English. In English language teaching, teachers had to follow the guidelines set up by the Russian experts. Texts and other English learning and teaching materials were imported directly from the Soviet Union. The Russian language teaching method was the traditional grammar-translation method. Language teaching consisted of a few courses: intensive reading, extensive reading, grammar, writing, and listening and speaking. Intensive reading was the key course while others were supplemental. Students learned through pattern drills, sentence making, and translation. This teaching method is still used in China today.

After a few years of reconstruction, China's economic development improved, and the Chinese Government gained more and more recognition from other nations, especially from Third World countries. Unexpectedly, the Sino-Soviet relationship began to worsen and it came to a split shortly after. The Chinese realized that they had to rely on their own people and resources for growth in the nation. The "Letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought be contented" movement started in 1956. The original intention of the government was to gain the trust of the intellectuals and then to use their wisdom and knowledge for socialist development. The Communists encouraged the intellectuals to express their ideas freely and to give suggestions and comments for the nation's development. The demand for learning English increased, and after a short period of training, many Russian teachers turned to teach English again to meet the need for more English teachers. Textbooks from the Soviet Union were put aside, and many English teachers tried out new teaching methods. Western language teaching theories were introduced into China. Soon intellectuals showed their favor for the Western educational system and expressed their dissatisfaction with the Chinese educational system adapted from the Soviet Union. However, this situation did not last long. Seeing that the intellectuals had gone too far and their free expression had become a threat to their ruling position, the Communist Party launched the "Anti-rightists" movement in

1957. Anything related to Western culture was labeled "Right-leaning." Many English teachers were either put to jail or sent to do physical labor on the farms to reform their bourgeois ideology.

This was followed by the "Great Leap Forward" movement in 1958. The Government stirred up all the people in the country to work hard so as to catch up with advanced countries. The involvement of the masses was emphasized. The government called on people from every walk of life in the country to join in the work of steel-making. Peasants and workers smashed their personal pots and woks to melt them into iron or steel. In English teaching, both teachers and students took part in developing learning materials which reflected the "righteousness of the Party and the great achievement of the masses." Unfortunately, experienced teachers trained in the West could not perform an active role in teaching nor in material development because they were not trusted by the Communists. As a result, students learned nothing but political slogans that praised the Communist Party and their leaders. This situation lasted until 1966 when the "Cultural Revolution" movement broke out.

As Mao Zedong, head of the Communist Party of China, got older, he became all the more suspicious. In 1966 he launched the "Cultural Revolution" movement to get rid of his political opponents. The whole country was in chaos. Workers and farmers stopped working to join in the 'revolutionary' movement. For a few years all schools were closed. Students became "Red Guards." They traveled around the country to publicize Mao's thoughts. Teachers and other intellectuals became the objects of criticism. They were criticized by the "Red Guards" and sent to the countryside or factories to experience the life style of the laboring class so they could be re-educated and reform their bourgeois and imperial ideology. Some schools reopened in 1970. However, schools were not the place for learning but the battle field of the "Red Guards." The "Red Guard" students spent much time reading Mao's works, writing wall papers and posters criticizing

counter-revolutionary teachers. Sometimes they visited factories and villages to support the laboring people's revolutionary movement. Occasionally English teachers were asked to teach how to write critical essays or how to translate some political slogans into English. Nevertheless, teachers had to be very careful about what they said. If they said something that offended either the students or the Communists, students would jump up and drag them away from their teaching, putting them on stage to be criticized by the masses or forcing them to walk along the streets with "Rightist" signs on them.

At that time, college and university students were called worker-peasant-soldier students as they were directly recruited from among workers, peasants, and the People's Liberation Army. They were chosen not because of their academic ability but because of their political background. It was not surprising to find that English major university students did not even know how to read the English alphabet. English language teaching at the college level started from the very basic: English letters and phonemes. Textbooks were compiled by WPS students and consisted of revolutionary slogans and Mao's sayings. No doubt there were students who wanted to do well in English. Unfortunately, they received very limited input in the English language. They had little access to English materials, and they had no opportunity to speak English. After three or four years of college education, they could hardly speak or write in English. All they knew were Mao's words and some political slogans from their memorization.

The "Cultural Revolution" came to an end with the death of Mao in 1976. Deng Xiaoping came into power in the following year. China experienced a revival both in economy and in education since the adaptation of the open-up policy in 1977. China expanded trading with other countries and welcomed foreign investment. Since then more and more advanced technology from the West has been used in China. Academic and cultural exchange programs between China and other countries have been set up and many Chinese scholars and students have the opportunities to study abroad. In education,

students have to meet certain criteria and pass the required examinations in order to enter a higher lever of study. For example, the college entrance examination for high school graduates in June every year is nationwide. Examinees have to get very high grades if they want to go to college or university.

More emphasis has been placed on English as a foreign language since the "Cultural Revolution". English is now a mandatory course in middle school, high school, and at college. It has become so popular that many English language schools have been set up to meet the increasing demand of the people. College graduates with English skills get better paid jobs such as working in travel agencies, in import and export trading companies, or translating science materials in research institutions. With the adoption of an open policy in education, English professionals have access to first hand English materials. They are able to study and use current theories in the field of English teaching and learning. With the help of foreign linguists and educators, the Chinese Educational Committee developed a series of textbooks suitable to different levels of students. Today, English students in China have more and more opportunities to communicate with foreign tourists in English. They also have the privilege of having native English speakers as their teachers. They can listen to English broadcasts such as the VOA (Voice of America) or the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) any time they want to. Then there are TV news in English and English courses through radio and television. In general, Chinese students' level of English is higher than before.

Confucian Educational Doctrines and Other Traditional Ideas

Chinese tradition and culture have a very strong impact on the Chinese people today. Confucian philosophy, Taoist ideology, and Buddhist doctrine shape the Chinese people's viewpoint, their behavior, and ways of thinking. When dealing with Chinese students, ESL/EFL teachers have to bear in mind that Chinese students have their own

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characteristics and strategies in learning as a result of the Chinese tradition and educational system. Being a Chinese myself and having taught English to Chinese students for about eight years, I would like to share some of my experiences in learning and teaching English as a foreign language.

For centuries the strong sense of individuality and family unity in China has been kept intact until the present day. Confucius and his disciples had urged the preservation of this rather admirable and much-praised tradition that has impressed itself so deeply on the life of the people. To Confucius, the world of the family and the world of the state were both closely linked together, and one was built on the other. With the miniature society of the family serving as the foundation of society, the individual learned within it much that he would find useful when he stepped out into the world-at-large. The family provided the training ground for service in the government later on, and the paternal sympathy and filial piety so obvious in the family was transformed into paternal benevolence and loyalty in the government of the state. At the core of the orthodox Chinese ethical system were *The Three Bounds* and *The Five Virtues*[4]. According to these moral standards, persons of lower social status should be loyal to their authorities, young people should respect old people, and women should be submissive to men.

Confucius said that a harmonious family was ideal and necessary. "Happy union with wife and children is like the music of lutes and harps. When there is concord among the brethren, the harmony is delightful and enduring. Thus may you regulate your family, and enjoy the pleasure of your wife and children" (The Doctrine of the Mean, chap. xv, sec. 2, as cited in Legge, 1971, p. 396). In a family, the children should be submissive to the parents as the parents always come first and the children naturally come second according to the "Three Guides." Children were expected to show respect and support for their parents, in this way observing the very essence of the virtue of benevolence. Even if the parents were doing what they were not supposed to do, the children should still show

respect for their parents by giving them only gentle advice but not trying to stop them: "In serving his parents, a son may remonstrate with them, but gently; when he sees that they do not incline to follow his advice, he shows an increased degree of reverence, but does not abandon his purpose; and should they punish him, he should not allow himself to murmur" (Analects, bk. iv, chap. xviii. as cited in Legge, 1971, pp. 170-171).

Just as a child should be subject to the parents at home, out in the society, a youth should be "respectful to his elders." (Analects, bk.i, chap. vi. as cited in Legge, 1971, p.140). This guideline is also true in the classroom. In Chinese students' mind, teachers are their higher authorities and their knowledge providers. Students are expected to pay respect to their teachers by listening attentively to the teachers' instructions and doing what their teachers ask them to do. It is not acceptable for students to challenge their teachers by questioning their instruction. Even asking questions in class is not encouraged. That might interfere with or interrupt the teachers' normal procedure. According to the virtue of propriety, students are not supposed to point out teacher's errors directly. If students sense something wrong with the teachers' instruction, they ought to point out the teachers' mistakes gently so as not to offend the teachers.

Through education, Confucius wanted to provide the opportunity of education for everyone in order to produce individuals of great wisdom and virtue for the state. He believed that human beings were good in nature and had the potential for self-development. He aimed at developing manhood, and directed his attention toward a man's being and personality to form his character. In this sense, Confucius' educational idea was quite humanistic. He once said "To learn and at due time to repeat what has been learned, is that not a pleasure?...To remain unsoured even though one's merits are not recognized by others, is that not what is expected of a gentleman?" (Analects, bk. I, sec.1, as cited in Zhou & Mei, 1992, p.1). Such a scholar-gentleman should aim at an

ideal manhood, complete, perfect, and well-rounded; what he received should be a broad and comprehensive character education.

To the Chinese, education was a way to become somebody in society. In the past, one had to pass the civil service test to become an official. Confucius considered education a way to nurture and develop a person so that he might become someone useful to the state. "To be fond of learning is to be near to knowledge. To practice with vigor is to be near to magnanimity. To possess the feeling of shame is to be near to energy. He who knows these three things knows how to cultivate his own character. Knowing how to cultivate his own character, he knows how to govern other men. Knowing how to govern other men, he knows how to govern the kingdom with all its states and families" (The Doctrine of the Mean, chap. xx, sec.10-11, as cited in Legge, 1971, pp. 407-408).

The situation is still pretty much the same today. The Chinese believe that "Good learners will be officials." As China is an agricultural country with 70% of its population (about seven hundred million people) being farmers and the living conditions in the countryside being poor, many young people want to live in the cities where the living standards are much higher. The only way they can get away from the countryside and live in the cities is to study hard and become college or university students. College graduates are in great demand and are sure of a well-paying job in the cities. Those who fail to pass the college entrance examinations have no chance of going to college and spend the rest of their lives working hard on the farm. A good education not only makes a youth's future bright, it also brings honor to the parents, to the family, and even to the community. As the popular Chinese primer the "Three-Character Classic" goes, (a well educated man) "brings fame and wealth to himself and at the same time honors his parents" (Wang, 1983, p. 249). Especially in the rural area where few people have schooling, the whole village will rejoice when a youth becomes a college student.

If we say that education in feudal China was intended to train state officials to be loyal to the rulers, then education in China today is to make everyone to be submissive to Communist control. Students have to take political theory courses throughout their entire school years -- from elementary to college education. Students have to learn the history of the Communist Party of China, Mao's life and his words, Marxist theory, etc. Texts and other reading materials are full of political essays. Students' political background decides their future. High school graduates need to have a trustworthy political background before they are permitted to take the college entrance examinations. Again, those who want to study abroad have to be approved by the Party Secretaries of their institutions. If any students dare to say something against a communist ruling, they will either be expelled from school or be sent to work in remote areas upon graduation.

In China, teachers are expected to be a model of knowledge and virtue for the students. Frequently students come to teachers for guidance in study, moral conduct, and even political direction. Teachers are supposed to know everything about their subject and always be ready to answer students' questions. In the students' mind, teachers are their guides who decide their future. That is not an exaggeration. Teachers' comment on students' report cards will accompany them throughout their lives wherever they go. Teachers' classroom behavior, their way of talking to the students, and even their physical appearances have a strong impact on the students. This places teachers in an awkward position as the respect-teacher tradition contrasts with the inferior political status of the teachers in reality. Since most of the Party leaders are from the army, warlords, or peasants and they do not have much education themselves, they often have a bias against the intellectuals, either out of class difference or jealousy. Intellectuals in China today get very low pay and limited benefits. Because intellectuals have the chance to read and they know something about Western countries, they are often regarded as rightists who are full of bourgeois ideas. As a result, they are the first to suffer in every

political movement. This morbid social symptom causes many teachers to turn to other professions, and fewer and fewer university graduates want to be teachers.

Another prevailing idea about education is that teachers need to be strict with students. This can be traced back to the "Three Character Classic", a primer known by every school child in old China. A verse in this Classic goes: "It is the father's fault who does not discipline his son, and a teacher who is not strict with the students is considered derelict of duty" (Wang, 1983, p.15). Teachers, in this view, shall have authority over the students. As learning is a serious matter, teachers shall make sure that their students are working hard enough. The Chinese believe that "A strict master makes good disciples." So students will learn a lot at school if they have enough assignments, if they take notes in class, and if they can memorize their texts. The relationship between teacher and students shall not be friendship, but teachers have sole jurisdiction over students.

On the other hand, students need to be diligent and persistent to do well in their studies. In the book of "Yung Ye," Confucius said that: "The man of virtue makes the difficulty to be overcome his first business and success only a subsequent consideration" (Analects, bk. vi, chap. xx. as cied in Legge, 1971, p. 191). There are many stories in the history telling children the moral of "no gains without pains."

Current Education System

Since the adoption of the "open-up" policy in 1976, the demand for learning English has increased rapidly in China. Many language schools and English departments have been set up to meet this demand. English teaching has become a nationwide program. The Central Committee of Education decided that English should be a mandatory course from middle school to college and university. In fact, some schools in the cities have English courses for elementary children. Besides, there are many people

who learn English through radio, television, or correspondence courses. China now has more English learners than any other nation in the world (Hou, 1989).

The importance of English learning can be found in the nation-wide entrance examinations. Only those high school graduates who pass the examinations get to study in a college or university. All examinees have to be tested in English besides other subjects of their major. Their grades in English count toward their total scores. The passing scores vary each year. The higher the score one gets, the better chance he or she will have for entering first-rate universities. Like the Civil Official Examination in Feudal China, the entrance examinations mean very much to all the people in China. The examinations are held in June every year. Months before the examinations, students work hard day and night reviewing their lessons and doing model tests. The whole family is as intense as the students themselves, as the outcome of the examinations will decide the future of their children. Parents try to provide their children with the best learning environment, excusing them from daily chores and getting any learning materials they can find for their children. Some parents stay up with their children late into the night, preparing nutritious food and drinks for them.

For many years all institutions in China used a few sets of English texts published in the late 1950s. "Advanced English" compiled by Beijing Foreign Language Institute and "English" by Shu Guozhang were the two series of texts used widely by different institutions for English major learners. Even today some of the institutions are still using these series either as their core texts or as supplementary materials. Because these texts were complied in the late 50s when the Sino-Soviet relationship was in its peak, the Soviet model is very obvious in these texts. Take the series "English" by Shu Guozhang for example. There are eight books in this series. Each book was intended to be used for a semester, so eight books would last for the four college years. Each lesson consists of a passage selected from works of progressive writers, a list of new words and phrases

appearing in the passage, notes including a brief introduction to the writer and some explanation on the selected passage, a few grammar points, grammar and translation exercises. The lessons in the first four books contain phonetic exercises and pattern drills. The arrangement of selected passages in each lesson is based on the grammar needs of the curriculum. That is to say, the grammar points in the passage are treated with higher priority than the content and the degrees of difficulty.

These texts, according to Hou (1989), have two major flaws. One of the flaws is the unnaturalness and artificiality of the passages as they are "organized around selected grammatical teaching points." The second weakness of these texts is that there is not enough time nor opportunity for students' oral communication exercises. After four years of college training, many students still find it difficult to communicate fluently in English.

There has been much improvement in the development and adaptation of English teaching and learning materials; the Education Committee in China developed a new syllabus and published a set of English texts for non-English major college students in 1986. This set of texts has four levels ranging from beginning to advanced to meet the needs of the students. At each level there are books for intensive reading, extensive reading, grammar, and listening and speaking. Some institutions developed their own texts for their English major students. Other institutions use texts imported from the U. K., the U. S., or other English speaking countries. More and more English newspapers, magazines, and books are available in China. "New Concept English" by L.G. Alexander and "Follow Me" by the BBC were very popular in many institutions in the 1980s. They were used either in intensive reading courses or as listening materials.

In the early 1980s, the core English teaching staff in China were the middle-aged teachers who were in their 40s or 50s. .Most of them learned Russian at college and were former teachers of Russian. As the Sino-Soviet relationship terminated in the late 1950s the need for Russian graduates dropped down and the demand for English increased.

These teachers of Russian switched to teach English after a short period of intensive training. Generally, their oral English was poor. They could not communicate fluently in English. However, they had classroom experience and they knew how to handle various problems. Many of these teachers had a firm grasp of English grammar. They had a relatively large vocabulary and were able to read things in English slowly. The teaching methods they used were mainly grammar-translation and other traditional ones. They felt more comfortable with intensive reading courses because in class they could spend hours going over the new word list or the grammar points. Courses that required more reading and communicative skills such as extensive reading, listening and speaking would not suit them.

The other group of teachers during that period were the WPS (workers, peasants, and soldiers) graduates. These teachers' knowledge in English was limited because teaching and learning was not regulated in the Cultural Revolution. Even though these young teachers' English was not highly proficient and they had little teaching experience, they were enthusiastic and liked to communicate with students in English. So these teachers won the favor of the students. They narrowed the gap between teachers and students by making friends with students and providing students with more opportunities for oral activities. Starting in 1983, the Education Committee in China set up Assistant Teacher's Training Courses (ATTCs) for these teachers to improve their English proficiency. After two years training, most of them received their post-graduate diploma and were then qualified to teach English in colleges and universities.

In the late 1980s, more and more college graduates joined the teaching staff. Benefited by the open-up policy, these graduates received systematic training in English. Many of them had the privilege of having native English speakers as their teachers. These young teachers had many advantages over the middle-aged and old teachers. They had good English competence and their oral and listening skills were much better than

those of the older teachers. They kept track of the up-to-date theories in education, and they were more than willing to try out new methodologies in their teaching. Nevertheless, lack of teaching experience and relatively low social status (compared to middle-aged and old teachers) hindered them from giving full play to their professional skills (Dzau, 1990; Oatey, 1990; Sun & Sun, 1989).

The open-up policy brought in many changes in the English language teaching in China. Western linguistic theories were introduced and discussed among educational professionals. Language teachers and students studied works by Chomsky, Widdowson, and other linguists. In addition to audio-lingual and structural teaching methods, cognitive learning, the communicative approach, and many other innovative methods were tested and used. Educators began to see the importance of psychology, culture, politics, and economy on language learning.

Teachers from English speaking countries such as Australia, Canada, England, and the U. S. were invited to teach English and help develop teaching curricula for different institutions in China. Foreign language experts worked with Chinese professionals to set up teacher training courses. Education delegations from English speaking countries visited China and started English teaching programs through radio and television. Exchange scholar programs gave Chinese professors the opportunities to observe Western education systems. More and more students went to study abroad and after a few years many of them returned to China and became university teachers. All of these contributed to the development of English language teaching (ELT) in China.

Learning Styles

Field Independent

Restricted by their learning environment, Chinese students have few opportunities for communicating with native English speakers. It is not that convenient for them to listen to English broadcasts or to watch English programs on TV. It is true that more and more English materials from the Western countries are available in China today; however, they are either too expensive or the content of these materials is too difficult for Chinese students. So Chinese students have to rely heavily on themselves in their studies. Many Chinese students are hard-working and persistent in their learning. They may sit for hours in the classroom or in the library doing their reading, writing, or translation exercises. Their past learning experiences give them the notion that if they work hard on their text and on the professor's teaching notes they will get good grades in their tests.

Trained by the traditional grammar-translation method, Chinese students are used to isolating details or elements or information from its context. English textbooks used in China are set up according to certain grammatical and structural arrangements. Each lesson has a few grammar points picked out from the passage in the text. In an intensive reading class, the teacher spends a lot of time explaining the grammar points -- breaking a sentence into small elements, finding out the function of each element, figuring out their relationship and usage, and then giving more examples of similar cases from other sources. Such analysis separates the grammar phenomenon from the passage in the text. English teachers in China also use this grammar-analysis teaching method when they are using texts imported from the West. They like to pick out a few grammar points from each passage and focus on these grammar points, ignoring students' reading comprehension skills. It is true that Chinese students have good grammar analysis skills as a result of such training.

In a traditional learning environment students are expected to respect their teachers. Good students shall behave themselves in class and shall not interrupt the teacher by asking questions. Instead, students shall listen to the teacher carefully and take good notes. They shall work diligently on their studies by learning their lessons by heart and finishing their homework in time. Teachers, in general, like well-behaved students because teachers are supposed to have full control of the class activities. If there is too much talk in the classroom, the school administrator may question the qualification of the teacher.

Analytic Learning

Detail-oriented as they are, Chinese students like to spend hours trying to figure out the syntactic function and morphological features of a word. For example, native English speakers will not bother to think whether the word "sitting" is a present participle or a gerund in a given sentence. However, Chinese students will not give up so easily. They will not feel easy until they reach an answer. They will go to a grammar book, dictionary, study guides, or finally, if they cannot find the answer from any book they can lay their hands on, they will go to the teacher.

A glance at their course syllabus will help us to see these characteristics of the Chinese students. Following are some of the required courses for the English major students: Intensive Reading (8 to 10 hours per week), Extensive Reading (2 to 4 hours), English Grammar (2 to 4 hours), Listening and Speaking (2 hours), English Composition (2 to 4 hours), English Literature (2 to 4 hours), and other courses. Intensive Reading is the primary course. Students have to take this course every semester for 4 years while other courses last only one or two semesters.

There are four or five stages in an Intensive Reading Course. In the first stage, the teacher spends three or four hours explaining and analyzing the grammar points, the new

word list, and the rhetoric and styles of the passage in the lesson. The second stage takes one or two class hours. The teacher focuses on the usage of new words and phrases. The teacher uses examples from other sources to show the meaning and usage of each word. Sometimes the teacher may ask the students to tell the meaning of some new words or phrases in Chinese. In the stage that follows, the teacher picks out from the passage some phrases and sentences that he or she thinks students have difficulty understanding. The teacher translates these phrases and sentences into Chinese, analyzes them with grammar diagrams, and then asks students to do drills on these difficult points. The whole process may take about two hours. Stage four is flexible depending on how much time is left. If there is time, students will have a chance to ask questions and do some discussion on the lesson. The teacher will then ask the students to talk about the text, its significance, the author's writing purpose, and how the students like the text.

Normally students are tested on their grammar analysis skills and on how many new words they have memorized. In order to get good grades, students have to know their lessons well. They do not need to do much extra reading from other sources. All they have to do is to know the new word lists in each lesson by heart and know how to analyze each passage they have learned. There is hardly any time or any need for interactive activities. Students have less and less time for communicative practice as their college years move on. During their freshmen and sophomore years at college, the students have more time to do extra-curriculum reading and to practice their pronunciation. The passage in each lesson is not very long and there are phonetic exercises at the end of each lesson. Freshmen and sophomore students like to participate in interactive activities. They seem to enjoy speaking English to each other in and outside the classroom. The passages in each lesson get longer in the texts for junior and senior students. It takes them a great deal of time to analyze the long passages. Moreover,

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there is more writing and translating work for junior and senior students. They are much quieter than the younger students and are reluctant to speak English to each other.

It is not surprising to see that Chinese students have good analytic skills while their reading and speaking skills are relatively poor. Even though they have very high TOEFL scores, many Chinese students find it difficult to keep up with the professor's lectures during their first year in the U. S. They need to enroll in English classes to improve their listening, speaking, and writing abilities (Dzau, 1990).

Visual Preference

The Chinese writing system is that of pictographs. Many Chinese characters used today are still bearing signs of the objects they represent. Some characters consist of only one part, i.e., 日 *rì* (sun/day) and 水 *shui* (water). Others are made up of two or more parts. For example, the character 明 *míng* (bright) has 日 *rì* (sun) and 月 *yuè* (moon) two parts, and 林 *lín* (wood) has two 木s *mù* (tree) while 森 *shen* (forest) has three 木s *mù*. The parts in a character can be related to an object or to a sound. For example, the left part of the character 泪 *lèi* (tear) is related to an object, water (氵 *shui* is another form of 水 *shui* but appears only in radical form) and the right part of the character 目 *mù* means eye. An example of a sound relationship is found in the character 淋 *lín* (to water). 淋 *lín* and 林 *lín* are homophones.

When children start to read and write Chinese characters, teachers show them the relationship between a character and the thing it symbolizes by using pictures or realia. Teachers first write down a character on the board and then draw or show a picture to help the young learners understand the meaning of the character. The strategy of using visual objects is very effective in learning Chinese characters. In this way students can visualize the similarities between the character and the object it represents. For example, the character 日*rì* (sun) comes from the older symbol ⊙ (found on bone or tortoise shell

inscriptions in ancient China) which looks like the sun, 月 *yuè* (moon) derives from a lunar crescent), and 水 *shui* (water) from three waterfalls ∫∫∫. Texts used by Chinese elementary pupils have inscriptions and pictures by the corresponding characters[5]. This method is also used to help Chinese pupils learn Roman letters in Pinyin (Mandarin phonetic alphabet).

Chinese students carry some of their Chinese character learning strategies into English learning. They use flash cards with English words on one side and pictures or Chinese meanings on the other side to help them memorize new words. In class, the teacher writes down a list of new words in each lesson on the board. The teacher then pronounces each word while pointing at it and asks the students to read after him or her. On the next day the same words are shown to the students again. The teacher checks the students' pronunciation and understanding by asking them to read and tell the meaning of each word in Chinese. Teachers in China write down everything they think important on the board for students. Chinese students find it hard to comprehend something they cannot see with their eyes. The same thing is true with grammar analysis. Teachers break down a sentence into small pieces and then use diagrams to show the students the relationship and connection between each part.

Orientation to Closure

As mentioned above, Chinese students are detail-oriented learners. They like to do analytic work in their studies. They have a strong desire for clarity. In class, they want the teachers to explain everything clearly for them. While reading on their own, they tend to read word by word. They constantly consult dictionaries or grammar books for words or language usage they are not familiar with to make sure they get everything accurately. It takes them too much time to read extra-curricular materials using their reading strategies, so Chinese students confine themselves to their textbooks. Besides,

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they know that they can score high in their tests by learning their texts well. They do not have a strong desire for reading extra-curricular materials. Hindered by their reading strategies and reading materials, Chinese students do not have much chance to improve their reading skills.

The irregularities in English spelling, pronunciation, and grammar usage are great obstacles to Chinese students. In their studies Chinese students like to memorize grammar rules and spelling regulations. Irregular verb tenses and many exceptional word usages often confuse Chinese students. They will have a difficult time understanding the writer or speaker when too many colloquialisms or informal expressions are used. Not many Chinese students have the opportunity to interact with native English speakers, and their contact with authentic English reading materials is limited. They generally lack the flexibility to react quickly in an unfamiliar language situation, especially when they have to deal with topics regarding the target culture and peoples. The language learned from books and the language used by people in real life are different. There are times when language learners seem to know the words in the passage they are reading, but still cannot understand the passage. Occasionally what the language learners write or say sounds awkward or unnatural even though grammatically there is nothing wrong. That is because they lack the flexibility when using the target language. The similar meanings of two or more words in English (but only one is acceptable in the context) may confuse the Chinese students. For example,

* Prices are cheap in a street market. (low)

Different concepts between Chinese and English can be a problem for Chinese learners.

* She felt glory to have won the medal for her country. (proud)

Prepositions are always a headache for Chinese students.

* At the airport, she got off the taxi. (out of)

In Chinese, adverbials are used as time indicators as there is no verb variation to show the

differences in tense. Therefore, many Chinese students avoid using tenses they are not familiar with.

* I saw that movie before. (have seen)

* He said he would wait for me here the next day. (would be waiting)

For Chinese students (and other language learners as well), one of the major problems in learning English is the idiomatic expressions or some special usage which does not necessarily fit in the regulations, but is acceptable to native speakers.

* I haven't received your letter for a long time. (received a letter from you)

* I use three hours to study every evening. (spend --- studying)

Lack of flexibility prevents the Chinese students from actively participating in informal talks or discussions. Many of them are reluctant to express themselves in class activities. They do not seem to enjoy role play or other learning games because they think learning games waste too much of their valuable time (Bunton, 1989).

Cooperative Learning

Confucian ideas have been the basic principles for the Chinese people for thousands of years. They have penetrated every aspect of the Chinese people's life and formed their moral standards. The basic idea of the Confucian value system was the . *The Three Bounds* and *The Five Virtues* which are a set of hierarchical relationships between people. There would be harmony in the family and in the society if all people adhered to their roles, whether it be high or low. Each person's position in society was ascribed relative to that of everyone else, and all individuals belonged in a network of relationships with other people. The result of such hierarchical relationship was a group dominated society. An individual had no value in the society unless he or she was connected to a social group --- a family or a community. When everyone learned to

accept these complex requirements and learned to accept his or her responsibilities, there would be a harmonious society.

Modesty is a good virtue in Chinese culture. Normally the Chinese do not praise themselves nor their family members. Self-praise is considered being boastful or overly proud. In America people will gladly accept others' complements on their dress, new hairstyle, or personal achievement. Parents can hardly wait to share their children's accomplishments such as good grades or any academic progress with their friends and neighbors (Levine, Baxter, & McNulty, 1987). However, traditional Chinese women will blush with shyness when they hear other people compliment them on their physical appearance or any good personal performance. In China, when parents hear any praise about their children they often downgrade their children by saying, "My kid is so dumb," or "That little one is good for nothing." It is common for a Chinese to deny any good comment attributed to him or her. Most of the times the individual will transfer the credit to the others or to the group.

It is not hard to understand why individualism has given way to collectivism in China. The tradition of family bonds and the social system in modern China both condemn individualism. Academically and economically successful individuals suffered endlessly during each and every political movement. Those who dared to stand out and express their views and give suggestions to their rulers, either the emperor or the Communist Party, were regarded rebels, and various charges would be laid against them. The Chinese learned to defend themselves by following the general trend. No one wants to go ahead of the others. During the Cultural Revolution hard working students were reproached as individualists who were seeking fame and pursuing capitalist living styles. Even today, many Chinese are still feeling uneasy about being an "individual hero."

One of the advantages of cooperative learning is that it creates a better learning environment for the Chinese students. Not many Chinese students have the opportunity

to interact with native English speakers. Some of the institutions may have the privilege of having a few native English speakers as their teachers. Even in those places, however, students have limited time to communicate with their foreign teachers outside of class. To create an English speaking environment, students form their own study groups. Students get together in their groups exchanging notes, practicing their oral English, helping each other in their homework, preparing for their tests, etc. Introvert Chinese students feel more comfortable working with their friends or other classmates whom they know well. In a cooperative learning environment they have more self-confidence and the courage to express themselves freely. Many students are generally quiet in a classroom setting because they are too shy to speak in front of the whole class. Such fear is gone when they are working in a small group.

Left and Right Brain Function

As mentioned in chapter one, studies by neurologists show that the two hemispheres of our brain have different roles in our behavior and learning process. The right hemisphere of our brain is thought to be in control of activities related to emotional and social needs; it is more concerned with spatial, global, or holistic processing. Right-hemisphere-dominated individuals are thought to have good perceptibility such as viewing pictures and recognizing people's faces. On the other hand, the left hemisphere is dedicated more to language. Its function is mainly related to processing analytic and sequential information such as logical thinking and word unscrambling (Brown, 1994; Hoosain, 1991).

However, in the case of learning to read and pronounce Chinese, it seems that both hemispheres of the brain are called into action: the right to the form of a Chinese character, and the left to the meaning of the character. The relationship of sound, script, and meaning in each character is a convergent whole in Chinese. Each character has a

complete meaning, even the radical or component in a character is a symbol or a picture representing an object in the physical world. . There is a distinctive pronunciation and tone for each character. Getting the sound of a character can be slow since there is no pronunciation regulation in Chinese. Language learners have to memorize the sound and tone attributed to each character. When they come across an unfamiliar character they tend to pronounce the character according to one of the radicals in the character. That makes sense because some of the characters are the combination of form and sound from two or more simple characters. Sometimes the radical or component of a character may give a suggestion as to the pronunciation and meaning of the character. For example, 評 *píng* (comment) has the meaning of 言 *yán* (speak) and the sound of 平 *píng* (even, flat). Nevertheless, such suggestion can be misleading and confusing at times. The character 酗 *xù* (drunk) comes from 酒 *jiu*(wine, alcohol) and 凶 *xiong* (fierce). However, its pronunciation is not related to any of its components.

Since the Chinese writing system is so different from that of phonologic languages, some linguists think that the process of learning Chinese is different from the way of learning English and other alphabetic languages. Sasanuma, Itoh, Mori, and Kobayashi (1977) did a study on learners' brain electric wave activities while learning Kanji and Kana in Japanese. Kanji is similar to Chinese characters and Kana is considered alphabetic writing. Their study showed that the learning of Kanji triggered more right-hemisphere activities and Kana engaged more left-hemisphere activities.

Other linguists (Kershner & Jeng, 1972; Feustel & Tsao, 1978) made surveys of students' cerebral reactions related to English and Chinese learning. They found out that the study of unrelated single Chinese characters showed a right-hemisphere advantage. When it came to words and phrases formed by two or more characters there was an indication of left-hemisphere superiority just as when they were learning English (Hoosain, 1991).

According to Hoosain, lateralization is function-specific rather than language-specific. Variables such as location and duration of presentation may affect the lateralization of perception of the words we learn. It does not matter what language we are learning. In perception of multicharacter Chinese words, individual characters may retain some of their effects due to their property of being a sensory whole. Because there is no conversion rule between the character and its pronunciation, it may be slower for the phonologic access of the character. However, it is more direct to get the meaning of the character due to its pictograph property. Hoosain points out that there is no indication of more right-hemisphere involvement in learning Chinese as compared to English and other alphabetic languages. Nevertheless, Chinese students have their learning characteristics as a result of their primary language effect. They rely more on the visual strokes of the character in their reading. As the script-sound association requires mechanic memorization, the problem of slow reading speed can be found among the Chinese students. Consequently, they indulge themselves in memorizing their lessons rather than in open-ended communications (Hoosain, 1991).

Intolerance of Ambiguity

Chinese students have their special learning styles that are facilitated by their native language learning experience and which they carry over into their EFL learning. Their native language teachers emphasize the importance of basic training. Children learn to write Chinese characters by first learning how to write the strokes and the order of strokes in each character. They start from the simple and common characters to the more complicated and less common characters. Language teachers do many reviews and tests to make sure the students know their lessons well before moving on to the next lesson. For the Chinese, repetition and testing is part of the language learning process, as Confucius said, "He who by reviewing what has been learned can draw new inspiration

and have new insight is fit to be a teacher" (Analects, bk. I, as cited in Zhou & Mei, 1992, pp. 22-23).

The intensive reading course in ELT is based on the traditional philosophy of education. Teachers spend much time on a short passage in each lesson, analyzing the passage word by word, explaining each word's meaning and grammar function. Being trained with traditional teaching methods, Chinese students learn English by memorizing words separated from the context and by reciting grammar rules from grammar books. In their readings, Chinese students focus on the meaning of the individual word instead of the meaning of the paragraph or the whole passage. They check in the dictionary for every single word they do not know in their reading. They cannot bear to let an unknown word slip by. Such reading habits do not help much in developing the reading strategies of skimming and scanning. The irregularity in English pronunciation and grammar annoys them because they expect everything to fall within certain rules. They feel puzzled by words that mean something in one context and mean something else in another context. They like to give a Chinese meaning to every word they come across. It is not easy for them to accept the fact that many times there is no Chinese equivalent for certain English words.

Students' primary language may also influence their logical thinking method and learning strategies. In Chinese, the relationship between character and sound is one to one. Each character has a distinctive sound. In English there are long and short words. Some words have only one syllable while other words may have four or five syllables. All English words are made up the combination of some of the twenty six alphabetic letters. In Chinese, each character is clearly different from the other. There is no verb tense variable in Chinese. Specific adverbs are used to show the exact time or place in a sentence. That explains why Chinese students like to use specific adverbs to express themselves when they speak English.

Affective Factors

Low Self-esteem

The value system in China is one of submission, reinforced with the support of authority figures. *The Three Bounds* and *The Five Virtues* embodied the social code of morals in traditional China. In present day China, loyalty to the Communist Party is supposed to be the virtue of a good citizen. Such a value system and political environment leave little room for individual character development. English teachers and students are not willing to excel or to become famous, as the Party believes in the action of the mass instead of each individual. Outstanding individuals are suspected of being individualists or of seeking personal fame. The Confucian ethics of modesty, humility, and not putting the individual above the group also influences the Chinese people's social practice. Some Chinese are superstitious, believing that the gods may be jealous of the success of the mortals (Chu, 1978).

The political and economic status of the intellectuals, especially teachers, is extremely low in China today. Traditionally, teachers were respected by everyone in society. Even today, teachers, particularly those in the key universities, are highly admired. However, intellectuals have very little say in government affairs. In fact, they are doomed to be the target of criticism in every political movement. Compared with the cadres, factory workers, and other professionals, teachers' pay is the lowest. All these hurt the self-respect of the teachers and the motivation of the students.

Then there is the influence of the L1 learning experience. One needs to know two to three thousand Chinese characters to be considered literate, i.e., being able to read

newspapers and write letters. It requires more than seven thousand characters to read works of literature and do academic studies. There are more than twelve thousand characters in the Chinese language. In general, it takes an average Chinese five years to learn to read and write three thousand Chinese characters. To the Chinese, language learning is difficult. There are always so many characters to memorize. They expect that learning English will be as difficult if not more than Chinese. The Chinese language has a strange complexity in its written form. It is hard for the Chinese to imagine a language which consists of only twenty-six letters with various combinations to form different words. It is particularly true as the Chinese have little contact with the outside world (Tucker, 1978).

The learning environment for EFL is not very pleasant for the Chinese learners. Students have no chance to use English in daily life. They cannot interact with native English speakers. Learning equipment and materials are limited, especially at schools in poor and remote areas. There is no computer, no VCR, not even cassette tape-recorders. Some students are too poor to purchase learning materials. At some schools, like those in the suburban and rural areas, English teachers' competency in English is low. Students have the impression that if even their teachers have great difficulty with English, such difficulty will be insurmountable for them.

Inhibition

Most Chinese students start learning English in secondary schools. They approach English timidly and cautiously because it is an entirely new field to them. To

defend their ego in the face of these unfamiliar subjects, Chinese students take a defensive attitude. At their early stage of English learning, Chinese students are quiet, and they feel uncomfortable using English. In class, they listen carefully and pay close attention to the teacher. In their studies they employ only those strategies they are familiar with. They think learning English is just like learning Chinese which involves much memorizing and drilling. They recite their texts and memorize all the new words in each lesson.

. English does not seem to be so strange to college students. Still, their knowledge about English is limited to a certain degree of sight-translation ability. They do much translation in their studies. Their only chance of English exposure is through their EFL teachers and their textbooks. They can tell you the Chinese meaning of many English words. Some students may be able to speak English with incomplete sentences. Still, their thought process is in Chinese even though their utterance is in English. So they avoid using English whenever it is possible. When they are asked to give an answer in English, they will try to give a brief answer. In class they feel more comfortable with the traditional grammar-translation teaching method because they do not have to speak so much in English. Oral practice and a communicative approach make them nervous.

Low Risk-taking

Those who have had the experience of being with Chinese students would probably notice that Chinese students are quiet and shy in the language learning class. Unlike Hispanic and other Western students who actively participate in class, Chinese

students are normally passive in their studies. Not many students have the courage to answer teacher's questions voluntarily; even fewer students dare to ask the teacher questions in class. Chinese students are afraid of making mistakes in front of others, as they may lose face. They do not want to be the focus of the class, so they are very careful with their words and behavior. Any errors in speaking will embarrass them because they care much about what others think about them. They do not want others to think that they are slow learners or they are not paying attention to the teacher's instruction in class. So they do not ask questions even if they are not clear or have doubt. Another reason for keeping quiet in class is due to students' unconditional obedience to their teachers. They are afraid that their question is an indication of casting doubt on the teacher's instruction and would cause the teacher to lose face.

This does not mean that Chinese students lack the motivation for English learning. On the contrary, Chinese students value education greatly. They are methodical and hard working students. To the Chinese, education is the necessary step leading to personal success. In traditional China, an academically successful child brought great honor to his ancestors and provided economic security for the whole family. For thousands of years the recruitment of civil servants through the Imperial Examination System made the whole nation realize the importance of education. The male youth or adults whose families could afford to give them schooling or private tutoring worked hard for the civil servant examinations. Those who passed the first level of the examination became Jiuren (Licentiates), and the few who passed the higher level became Jinshi (Doctors). Both levels of the examinations tested the examinees' writing in provided topics according to a

stereotyped form known as the Eight-part Essay (八股文). These forms remained unchanged for thousands of years until the fall of the Qing Dynasty at the turn of this century. Learning involved much recitation of model literary works and endless training in writings based on the form set out in the Eight-part Essay. Learners never thought of doing something different, and they were too timid to try any new forms in their writing.

Education in China today is more or less based on the old model. All schools are supposed to follow the syllabus set out by the Department of Education and use the texts containing works of progressive writers. The English major students spend most of their time doing Intensive Reading, the most important required course for all students. The students' role in the learning process is a passive one. They do as the teacher asks them to and do much memorization in order to get high grades in the tests.

The detailed study in the Intensive Reading course does not help much in developing students' imagination and free writing. Students rely heavily on the teacher's instruction for information input, and they will not feel secure unless they have their textbooks and written notes in front of them. To the Chinese students, how good they are in English depends on how many passages or how many English words they can memorize. That is one of the reasons why many Chinese students do not like to engage in open-ended questions (Dimond, 1983; Dzau, 1990).

Introversion

Unlike the Western countries where initiation, creativity, and individualism are strongly encouraged, the Chinese government emphasizes stability, central authority, and collectivity. Over-population and lack of natural resources make it necessary for China to

avoid any radical change. For thousands of years China closed itself to international relations. The Chinese people were satisfied with the little they had and felt proud of the nation's glorious long history. Confucian ideology provided the philosophical foundation for consolidation and conservation. The belief that the family should come before the individual, the senior before the junior, and the nation before local government has taken root among the Chinese people. All these have helped the nation in gaining its economical and social security (Dzau, 1990).

One characteristic of the Chinese people is their ability to control or to hide their feelings and the cultivation of high moral standards (Smith, 1991). Confucius once said that a man of virtue should be "earnest in what he is doing, and careful in his speech" (Analects, bk. I, chap. xiv, as cited in Legge, 1971, pp.141-142). It is a popular belief among the Chinese that not showing one's emotions is a masculine feature of all men. Toddling boys are taught to be brave and not to shed tears even if they fall down and get hurt. Parents do not praise their children in front of the guests. Instead, they put down their children to teach them how to humble themselves before others.

Being outspoken is not welcome in a classroom setting. A good student is expected to respect the teacher and listen to the teacher attentively. Other students may think that a person is trying to show off if he or she talks too much and asks many questions in class. The Chinese believe that those who are well-taught are often the quiet ones, and those who do not know much like to boast around. Learning is serious business for the Chinese. By asking questions one is distracting the teacher and the students. Such a person should feel guilty since in doing so he or she is wasting the teacher's and other students' valuable time.

Political experience is another factor which contributes to Chinese students' introversion. The importance of the group over the individual obstructs the individual from being the focus of the class. During the Cultural Revolution, outstanding students

would be labeled capitalist intellectuals and sent to work in remote areas where living conditions were poor. Teachers who were popular among students were thought to be seeking fame or trying to contaminate them with capitalist ideology.

Sensitivity

It is true that Chinese students are conservative and quiet in class. That does not mean they do not care about their learning or they are not working hard in their studies. On the contrary, they are very sensitive about every single movement of the teacher and take the teacher's word seriously. In China the teacher-student relationship is very sophisticated and complicated. The Confucian teaching that "A youth ought to be submissive at home and respect others in society" is still the guideline for every youth in China. Teachers are the students' seniors as well as their knowledge providers. It is the tradition in China that students show respect toward and reliance on their teachers. There is a saying that "one day's teacher, a lifetime master." It means that even though someone has been teaching you for only a short period of time, you should always respect that person.

Students' attitudes towards teachers helps to explain why they care so much about what their teachers think about them. Students work hard to please the teacher. They are concerned greatly about their testing scores and their teacher's attitude towards them in and outside of class. The teacher's correction and comment on their work may mean a lot to the students. Many students flush when called upon to answer the teacher's questions, and they feel so embarrassed if they make mistakes in their answer. In this

case, it is crucial for the teacher to understand students' feelings, especially those students whose English proficiency is limited. It is not easy to read the students' minds since they do not actively participate in class activities, and thus there is not much feedback from them. Instead, teachers should place themselves in the position of the students and try to give them more encouragement with positive comment.

One thing students cannot bear is the teacher not treating them fairly. Students know at once if the teacher cares about them, has confidence in them, or understands their feelings. Students will lose interest in English learning if they know that their teacher does not have confidence in them. We know that there are many ways to express oneself and there are different ways to solve a problem. The teacher should give students credit even though their learning strategies or their ways of expressing themselves are different from that of the teacher's. Acknowledgment from the teacher on their effort will help to strengthen students' self-esteem.

Anxiety

It is not surprising that Chinese students should have much anxiety in English learning. First of all, there is the anxiety that comes from the students themselves. As we know, English and Chinese are different languages. It is a big challenge for the Chinese students to learn a new language whose writing system, phonetic system, and grammatical structure are completely different from the native language. Besides the language itself, students also have to learn other things that are related to the language such as the people and the culture of the target language. Then they need to get used to

the teacher's teaching styles and try some learning strategies they may have never used before. All these may cause great stress for them.

Another kind of anxiety comes from the expectation of the teacher, the parents, and the students themselves. The teacher wants the students to reach a certain level of proficiency in their reading, writing, listening and speaking (the four skills). Students have to work hard to finish their assignment and to get good scores on the tests. The teacher also expects students to be able to pronounce some sounds not existing in Chinese (e.g. θ, ð, tʃ, dʒ), to read a text in English.

In China, the whole family works together to provide their children with the best possible learning condition. The Chinese have "a strong, almost fanatical emphasis on education and achievement for the children" (Smith, 1991, p. 39). They will not be happy until their children do well in all schoolwork and get good scores on every test. At home parents keep pushing their children by buying them more and more study materials.

The learning environment such as classroom pressure, the problem of finding learning partners, etc., may also bring anxiety to Chinese students. They have no contact with native English speakers. People around you may stare at you with sardonic looks if you speak English with your partner in public places. The learning atmosphere in a language class is not always pleasant. The fear of being called upon by the teacher, the concern for their testing result, the desire to express themselves, and the strong emphasis on the correction of mistakes all pile up in the students' mind. Students' anxiety will not decrease until they get used to the teacher's teaching routine and feel sure that they are not falling behind.

Social factors such as one's ethnicity, family background, and economical problems can also cause anxiety to language learners. In China, Han is the major ethnic group and their language, Mandarin, is the official language. Besides Han, there are about 164 other ethnic minority groups and each ethnicity has its own language. Within the Han group, even though the written form of the Chinese language is the same everywhere, the pronunciation of the language has drastic regional differences. At all schools teachers must use Putonghua Chinese[6] in their instruction (with the exception of some advanced English classes). So those students whose Mandarin is not so "standard" have to work extra hard in their studies. Some of their teachers may ask them not to use their dialects at school for fear that their dialects might hinder their English learning. Students from the rural and remote areas and students whose families are not very well off bear more psychological burdens. They feel inferior because they cannot afford modern equipment such as a radio, tape recorders, computers, or current learning materials. Many parents of those students have had very little education and there is very little they can do to help their children academically.

In summary, Chinese students' characteristics are the product of Chinese history, Chinese tradition, and the Chinese language. Cognitively, Chinese students are generally passive recipients. They rely heavily on their teachers in their learning. They are test-oriented and have a strong emphasis on memorization. Written words are held valuable by the Chinese people. As a result, Chinese students show a visual inclination in their learning. They cannot tolerate irregularity or ambiguity in their studies because they are so used to clarity in every aspect in traditional grammar-translation teaching methods.

Psychologically, Chinese students are introverted. They are too shy to ask questions in class as they are afraid they might lose face in front of others. In this sense, they are more comfortable in a cooperative learning environment. The Chinese have a good attitude towards education. However, many Chinese students lack the confidence to do well in English. English class can often cause much anxiety to Chinese students.

3. A SURVEY ON CHINESE STUDENTS' EFL LEARNING PREFERENCES

Being a Chinese myself, and because of my personal experiences as an English language learner and teacher in China and in America, I notice that there are many differences between Chinese and American Students. The differences exist not only in their learning strategies, but also in their approach, their attitude, and their motivation towards English. There have been many articles about Chinese students' characteristics and learning styles. However, very few articles discuss the relationship between Chinese students' English learning strategies and their social and psychological influences. I feel it is interesting and helpful to find out what is behind Chinese students' English learning preferences, the influence of L1 on L2, the role of Chinese culture and philosophy in Chinese students' attitude toward English, and some of the emotional reactions aroused by learning English.

My survey was conducted in Los Angeles and Orange County, California. In the past decade or so many new Chinese immigrants have settled in Southern California, especially in the Los Angeles and Orange County areas. My selection of survey subjects was rather random. There was no specific people group that I targeted. I gave the questionnaire to the Chinese I know at school, at work, and in the church. Some of my friends who are teaching ESL in community colleges and in adult schools helped me collect data. As a result, my subjects vary in age and in professions: from 18 to 65; some were studying at college or at adult school, some were working in restaurants, some were working in government agencies, some ran their own business, and some were house-

wives. All of them had attended schools before coming to the United States and had had English learning experiences either in middle schools or at colleges.

I distributed about fifty sets of questionnaires between November 1992 and May 1993 and received 34 sets back. Out of the 34 sets I got back, 31 of them were completed. I made my questionnaire into English and Chinese bilingual format for fear that some of the respondents' English proficiency was limited. Another advantage of putting the questions in bilingual form is that the two languages complement each other nicely. Some of the questions might need further explanation in English, however the questions would be self-explicit in Chinese. For example, the question "If you are asked to speak aloud in class and you make a mistake in verb tense, do you want your teacher to correct your mistake directly or indirectly?" might not be very clear to those who are not familiar with language learning and teaching terminology. However, the Chinese respondents would have no problem understanding the Chinese version.

Along with the questionnaire, in 1993 I also interviewed twenty-one Chinese in the area. To make the interview casual and relaxed, I did not use a tape recorder during my interview. Among the people I interviewed, twelve were males and nine were females. Fifteen of them were from Mainland China, three from Taiwan, and three from Hongkong. Chinese is their native language. Those from Mainland China and Taiwan speak Mandarin, and those from Hong Kong felt more comfortable with Cantonese even though two of them can also speak Mandarin (with strong accents). In the interview, I tried to use as much English as I could. However, some of the interviewees had some difficulty expressing themselves clearly in English. In such cases, both English and Chinese were used. The interviewees' professions varied from student, motel manager, insurance agent to pastor.

The interview averaged eighteen minutes with some as short as fifteen minutes while others lasted over thirty minutes. I started the conversation by asking them some

general questions about their background such as how long they had been in the United States, where they were living, and what they were doing. There was no fixed format in the interview. I tried to make my questions brief and clear and allowed my interviewees to express themselves freely. All the time I tried to guide the conversation to center around the topic: have the interviewees share their view and experience on learning English as a foreign language.

The Questionnaire

The survey consisted of two parts: a questionnaire and an interview. The questionnaire is an adaptation of Oxford's "Strategy inventory for Language Learning" version 7.0 (ESL/EFL) included in her book Language Learning Strategies (1990). I expanded the questionnaire to include some questions regarding the respondents' attitude towards their teacher, towards English, their motivation and affective variables. Following is a summary of the questionnaire. The original questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

1. *English Learning Strategies.* Subjects are asked whether they are auditory or visual oriented; whether they enjoy reading and writing; whether they are individual or cooperative learners; whether they are dependent or independent learners; what role memorization has in their learning.

2. *Affective Variables.* Several questions are presented which try to collect information related to the following areas: risk taking, sociability, anxiety, expectation of teachers, concern for grades, attitude towards English and testing.

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Risk-taking: Will learners be willing to speak English in class? Do they feel like asking the teacher for help if they have questions? In what condition do they feel comfortable to interact with the teacher in English?

Sociability: Do they like to talk to the teacher individually or like to be accompanied by other students when talking to the teacher? Do they like to role play in class? How do they like to work in pairs and in a group? Do they like to work in a quiet environment?

Anxiety: How do they feel if the teacher asks them questions in class? How do they feel if they do not know the answer to a question? How do they feel when they make a mistake in class? How do they feel when they are taking an oral or a multiple choice test? How do they feel when the teacher corrects their mistakes in their speaking in class?

Expectation of teachers: What qualities do they like in a teacher? Should a teacher be kind to or strict with students? Should teachers be sensitive to students' feelings? Should teachers be serious about their teaching? How should teachers correct students' errors in class? What do they feel if a teacher shows favor for certain students? What do they feel if they are misunderstood by the teacher?

Concern for grades: How do they like taking tests? How eager are they for their testing results? Are they curious about others' grades? Do they want do know who did better or worse than they did in the test?

Attitude towards English: How confident are they in English learning? What do they think English learning should be?

3. *Teacher's Model.* Subjects are asked what kind of model a teacher should be for the students. In what way are they influenced by their teachers?

Table 1

Learning Preferences of Chinese Students

	Low				High
What are your learning preferences?	1	2	3	4	5
					Mean Score
1. To remember a word, I must see it.					4.1
2. To remember a word, I must hear it many times.					2.1
3. In English class, I like reading the best.					2.0
4. In English class, I like writing the best.					2.4
5. I enjoy reading books assigned by the teacher.					2.8
6. I enjoy reading books of my own interest.					3.4
7. I memorize all the new words and phrases in each lesson.					3.3
8. I remember the texts I learned.					2.7
9. I find it is helpful to memorize grammar regulations.					4.6
10. I find it is helpful to remember rules of pronunciation.					3.2

Learning Preferences of Chinese Students

In Table 1, I listed ten questions to find out Chinese students' preferences in EFL learning. The questions are arranged in scales of five with one on the low end and five the high. Learning strategies related to motivation, sociability, etc. are included in other categories. From the mean score of the responses we can see that the Chinese students

are more visual oriented than audio oriented. That is due to their first language (L1) transference. Because Chinese students learn to write a Chinese character by recognizing its ideograph form and by remembering the sequence of each stroke, they apply the same strategy in their EFL learning. They try to memorize the form and the alphabetical arrangement in each word instead of its pronunciation and the relationship between the word and the letters (Dzau, 1990).

There are more students who like writing (2.9) more than reading (2.0). This learning preference may be associated with Chinese culture and then again with their L1 learning experiences. Chinese people have the tradition of valuing written words. One of the measurements for education is to see how many Chinese characters a person can write. Many Chinese students still think that learning to write is more important than learning to read. Children learn to speak Chinese long before they go to school. At school they learn to write and to read the printed characters in the text. To school children, it is harder learning to write Chinese characters than learning to read them. Knowing how to write a character often means knowing how to read it, but not *vice versa*.

The teacher's role in traditional teaching is that of a master who has total control of the class activities. Students' attitude towards teachers is that of respect, obedience, or dependence. In class, the teacher does most of the talking -- giving instruction, telling word definitions, explaining grammar usage, etc. All the time students are busy listening, taking notes, or drilling over grammar rules. Students in China have been trained in this way since their first day of school. They do whatever they are instructed by the teacher. They read books assigned or recommended by the teacher. Another reason for these situations is that there are not many reading materials available for Chinese students, especially for the students in the rural areas.

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It is not surprising to find the mean scores for memorization all fall on the higher end. Memorization is one of the most widely used learning strategies for the Chinese students. Dzau points out that the Chinese students' way of learning the written form of the Chinese language is memory based. They spend many hours trying to memorize words, passages, or long texts. Their most admired teachers tell them that it will be very beneficial for them to memorize model poems, prose, and passages. They think the same thing must be true with English learning. Instead of using English in communication, they spend much time and energy on memorizing new words, texts, and grammar rules (Dzau, 1990).

Affective Variables: Risk-taking

Table 2 on the following page explains why Chinese are generally quite in an EFL class. Teachers who have had experience with Chinese students may have noticed that Chinese students do not like to take initiative in class. In class everyone sits quietly as if they do not have any questions. During break time or after class, many students will gather around the teacher with various questions. They do not ask questions in class because they do not want to look ridiculous in front of others. They feel more comfortable talking to the teacher or to other students personally. In that case, even if they make mistakes or ask some unrelated questions they will not lose face before the whole class. Students with low self-esteem or limited English proficiency prefer asking other students (2.1) or try to solve their problems by themselves (1.7) rather than asking the teacher.

Table 2

Affective Variables: Risk-taking

	Low				High
If you have a question in class, you would...	1	2	3	4	5
					Mean Score
1. ask the teacher immediately.					2.3
2. wait until class is over then go and ask the teacher.					3.9
3. ask other students but not the teacher.					2.0
4. try to solve the problem by yourself.					2.3
Which of the following is true of you?					
5. I like to speak English in class.					3.7
6. I feel shy when I speak English in class.					3.2
7. I always volunteer to answer the teacher's question.					2.2
8. I should wait for the teacher to call on me.					3.4
9. I like to express myself freely.					3.5
10. I have to be sure of my answer before speaking.					4.2

Not many Chinese students volunteer to answer teacher's questions in class (2.2). Normally they will wait until they are called on to give an answer (3.4) even though they

have the answer in their mind. Most of the Chinese students have to be sure of an answer before they give out their responses. That is not because they lack the motivation but because they do not want to lose face. Generally Chinese students are conservative. They feel shy when they are asked to speak in class (3.2). With the introduction of current teaching and learning theories into China, Chinese students are beginning to see the importance of communication in their EFL learning. Many students do not want to miss a chance to speak English in class (3.7).

Table 3

Affective Variables: Sociability

	Low 1	2	3	4	High 5
					Mean Score
1. I do best if I study with one or two friends.					4.5
2. I do best if I study by myself in a quiet place.					1.7
3. I find it beneficial to do group discussion in class.					3.3
4. I enjoy giving performance in English.					1.8
5. I like to talk to my English teacher individually.					2.7
6. I talk to the English teacher only when accompanied by other students.					3.7

Affective Variables: Sociability

The influence of social ideology on learning can be found in Chinese students' learning sociability. The tradition of encouraging unity and condemning individualism has fostered Chinese students' cooperative learning habit. We can see from Table 3 that almost all the subjects in the survey believe that it is better for them to work with their friends (4.5) than to work alone (1.7). On campus one can find small groups of students everywhere -- talking to each other, exchanging notes, reciting word lists, or preparing for the test. Even when they go and talk to the teacher they like to have the company of other students (3.7). Fewer students prefer talking to the teacher individually (2.7). To do things in a group helps the Chinese students in their studies because "the wisdom of the masses exceeds that of the wisest individual." Working in a group gives the Chinese students a sense of security because the whole group, not any individual, will be responsible for the mistakes occurring in a group project. However, not many Chinese students enjoy giving performances in English (1.7). The Chinese take learning seriously. Anything not directly related to the text they are learning will be considered wasting their valuable learning time (Dzau, 1990).

Table 4

Affective Variables: Anxiety

	Low				High
What degree of anxiety do you have in the following activities?	1	2	3	4	5
					Mean Score
1. asking the teacher to explain something					2.9
2. asking the teacher for the meaning of a word					2.7
3. being called on when you do not know the answer					4.1
4. being called on when you know the answer					2.4
5. being called on to read aloud from the text					2.6
6. making a mistake in speaking in class					3.5
7. making a mistake when you speak to the teacher					3.7
8. having a dialogue in pairs					1.9
9. having a discussion in a small group					2.0
10. acting out a story in class					3.8

Affective Variables: Anxiety

To find out Chinese students anxiety in learning English as a foreign language, I listed ten situations frequently appearing in an English learning environment and had the subjects indicate their reaction on a five-point scale. The result in Table 4 revealed that Chinese students tended to have a high degree of anxiety in many EFL learning situations. From Table 4 we can see that being called on when one does not know the answer creates the highest degree of anxiety (4.1) while having a dialogue in pairs and having a discussion in a group causes the lowest degree of anxiety to Chinese students -- 1.9 and 2.0 separately. As mentioned earlier, Chinese students do not usually take initiative in their learning. Even though they may not be clear about certain points with regard to the teacher's instruction, they are not going to ask the teacher right away. Due to the different social status between the teacher and the students, Chinese students are generally reluctant to ask the teacher for clarification. It is disrespectful for a student to cast doubt on the teacher's explanation. Other learning activities such as reading aloud in class, making mistakes in speaking in class, and acting out a story in class can also cause anxiety. It is natural to have anxiety in language learning. Anxiety can be both good and bad for the learners. If students have too much anxiety over an activity they will not be able to think and learn properly. Nevertheless anxiety sometimes can help students to pay attention in class, keep them alert, and have a lasting effect on their learning. For instance, most Chinese students are shy and conservative; no doubt, acting out a story in class might produce much anxiety (3.8). Yet students will work hard at it and be able to remember their part in the story long after their performance.

Table 5

Students' Expectation of Teachers

	Low				High
What qualities do you like in a teacher?	1	2	3	4	5
					Mean Score
1. be able to answer students' questions					4.1
2. encourage students to ask questions					3.4
3. be nice to students					3.7
4. be strict with students					3.2
5. be concerned about students' feelings					4.3
6. be serious about his/her teaching					3.7

Students' Expectation of Teachers

As Smith (1991) points out, the Chinese are obsessed with social order. There is a set of hierarchical relationships between people, with the senior members exercising a wide range of prerogatives over the junior members. This value system is also true in the teacher-student relationship. The Chinese students' attitude towards their teachers is that of respect, dependence, and worship (Dzau,1990). The result of my investigation in

Table 5 supports Smith and Dzau's findings. In Chinese students' mind, a teacher is a person who knows his or her subjects well. Not only that, a teacher should know everything and be able to answer all students' questions (4.1). A teacher should always be ready to give students advice and help them out with their problems in study or in their personal life. Many students place their teachers in the same position as their parents. As parents, teachers should be strict with students (3.2) and be concerned about students' feelings (4.3).

In a sense, a teacher is in control of the students' future. A teacher checks students' papers, gives students grades, and makes comments regarding students' learning and behavior. All these go into the students' records and will accompany them for the rest of their lives. In the case of senior college students, a teacher together with other school leaders decides where a student shall go or what kind of job is for each student after graduation. That is another reason why students treat teachers with reverence and rely on them.

Concern for Grades

To investigate Chinese students' concern for their grade, I enclosed in the questionnaire five questions to check their eagerness for the result of their test (see Table 6). The present study shows that not many Chinese students want to forget their test (1.5), or at least they cannot forget their test even if they want to. As we know, grades mean so much to Chinese students. They are one of the most important indications of their achievement in their studies. They will have to show their grades to their parents.

They know what kind of grade makes their parents happy. That is why they are so eager to know the scores of their test (4.8). If their test score is not as high as they expected, they may feel gloomy for a long time. In that case, they will resolve to work harder and try to do better in the next test. Many of them want to find out who did better than they did in the test (3.9). They will then ask and observe those better students for their learning strategies. In the meantime, they secretly take the better students as their imaginary opponents and determine to overtake their opponents in the near future.

Table 6

Concern for Grades

	Low				High
After each test, you ...	1	2	3	4	5
					Mean Score
1. want to forget about it.					1.5
2. are eager to find out your score.					4.8
3. are eager to find out your friends' score.					3.3
4. are anxious to find out who did better than you.					3.9
5. are anxious to find our who did worse than you.					2.6

Table 7

Attitude Towards English

	Low				High
What do you think of English?	1	2	3	4	5
					Mean Score
1. It is easy and I am sure I can learn it well.					1.4
2. It is not easy but I can learn it well.					3.9
3. It is too hard for me.					2.2
4. I am not sure if I can learn it well.					2.4
5. One needs to be serious in order to learn English well.					2.1
6. Learning English can be fun.					3.6

Attitude Towards English

As shown in Table 7, very few Chinese students think English is easy for them (1.4). It is not that Chinese students do not have language talent. On the contrary, many Chinese speak two or more languages (or two dialects as far as the writing system is concerned). The Chinese language itself has many regional varieties, and the Chinese spoken by people of a certain geographic region cannot be understood by people from

other areas. Besides their native language, the Chinese know how to speak Mandarin -- the standard Chinese officially used all over China. Some people, especially those from the minority regions, speak three or four languages. However, when it comes to English, things are different. English and Chinese are different language systems. Chinese people have very little contact with English speaking people. They have even less contact with the English culture. Yet, as Dzau says, "Chinese students are generally known all over the world as being highly motivated, hard working, intelligent, and methodical" (1990, p. 79). They know it is not easy to master the English language but they have the motivation and confidence to learn it well (3.9). A small number of students who lack self-confidence think English is too hard for them (2.2).

Influenced by the Confucian education philosophy, Chinese students take learning seriously (3.6). They believe that "no pain, no gain" and "perseverance spells success." Activities that are fun or not directly related to learning such as learning games, role play, etc., will be considered a waste of time. Perhaps they get their opinion about language learning from their Chinese learning experience.

Attitude Towards Teacher's Classroom Behavior

Table 8 proves that "a strong emphasis on the correction of mistakes, both written and oral" (Harvey, 1990, p. 169) is the situation in ELT in China. Students may complain about the teacher for not being strict enough with them if the teacher does not correct every mistake they make in speaking or in their homework. However, when it comes to the teacher's method in correcting their oral mistakes, students' reaction may vary.

Table 8

Attitude Towards Teacher's Classroom Behavior

	Low				High
When the teacher corrects your error in pronunciation in class, you think...	1	2	3	4	5
					Mean Score
1. that is normal.					2.7
2. that the teacher hurts your feelings.					2.3
3. that you look silly in front of others.					3.1
In class if you make a mistake in speaking, you think it would be better if the teacher ...					
4. corrected your mistake immediately.					2.2
5. corrected your mistake after class.					3.5
6. corrected your mistake directly.					2.7
7. corrected your mistake indirectly.					2.8

Some students want the teacher to correct their mistakes immediately (2.2). They are afraid if the teacher puts the mistake aside he or she may forget it, and the students may make the same mistake again. For them, there is nothing wrong with the teacher's correcting their mistakes in pronunciation in class (2.7).

Still, more students prefer that the teacher correct their mistakes after class (3.5). In that case, they do not have to lose face in front of the whole class. Being asked to speak before the class is embarrassing enough for them, not to mention how frightened they are if they make any mistakes in their speaking. If the teacher points out their mistakes there and then, the students' feelings will be hurt to a certain extent (2.3). According to the responses in my questionnaire, there is not much difference between the number of students who want the teacher to correct their mistakes directly (2.7) and who want their teacher to correct their mistakes indirectly (2.8).

Teacher's Influence

Byron and Macmillan (1990) describe the language teacher in China as a high authority who has the combined role of a military commander, a high priest, a judge, and an executioner. As a military commander a language teacher has total control of students' learning and expects the students to be disciplined and obedient. As a high priest the teacher has answers to all students' questions and expects students to respect him for his superior wisdom. As a judge the teacher is expected to solve the often arbitrary imposition of notions of right and wrong in any language situation. As an executioner the teacher has a major influence over success or failure in students' lives. From Table 9 below we can see that the teacher's influence on students is immense. The Chinese believe that a teacher should be a paragon of virtue and learning to the students. From table 9 we can see that a teacher has influence over the students in every aspect of

their life, not only on their learning habits (4.0), their self-confidence in learning (3.8), but also on their attitude toward education (4.1) and towards other people (3.2).

Table 9

Teacher's Influence

	Low				High
To what degree have you been influenced by your teacher in the following?	1	2	3	4	5
					Mean Score
1. attitude towards education					4.1
2. attitude towards other people					3.2
3. attitude towards life					3.6
4. confidence in learning English					3.8
5. learning habit					4.0

Table 10

Student-Teacher Relationship

	Low				High
In class when you are misunderstood by the teacher you feel ...	1	2	3	4	5
					Mean Score
1. frustrated.					2.1
2. angry at the teacher.					1.9
3. you will not dare to speak in class again.					2.2
4. that is normal.					3.4
5. as if nothing has happened.					2.7
In your class, there are two or three students who speak English well. It seems that the teacher always asks them questions, calls on them to speak, and lets them do errands. As an average student, you feel ...					
6. relieved because you do not want to be called upon.					1.8
7. happy for them because they are getting extra attention.					2.3
8. jealous of them.					2.3
9. angry at the teacher for playing favorites.					2.8

Student-Teacher Relationship

Table 10 shows how Chinese students feel about and react toward their teachers. Due to the special role of the teacher in students' learning, a teacher's classroom behavior and his or her attitude towards the students have a lasting impact on the students. Students may get frustrated (2.1) but seldom feel angry at the teacher (1.9) if they say something and get misunderstood by the teacher. Nevertheless, such misunderstanding may result in some students' refusal to speak in class in the future (2.2). Every student has the right to be treated fairly by the teacher. If they feel that the teacher does not care much about them, they may feel that they are being rejected. Students will not be happy when the teacher shows favoritism towards other students (2.8).

The Interview

While most of the questions in the questionnaire are five-level scales for the subjects to circle, the questions I used in the interview are generally open-ended. The interviews focus on the subjects' academic and social background, their motivation, and their psychological reaction in the learning process.

1. *Personal background:* What is the educational background of the interviewee's parents? Did their parents have any English learning experience? Do they have anyone in their family who has learned English? What is the expectation of their family? What were the subjects doing before coming to the United States? Do they use much English at work? What impact did their family members, fellow students, and teachers have on their life?

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2. *Motivation:* The interviewees are asked to share their reasons for learning English. Are they learning English for a better job, for going abroad, to fulfill language requirements at school, or to please their parents?

3. *English learning experiences:* What were their pleasant experiences in their English class? What were some of their unpleasant experiences? What were their unforgettable moments in learning English as a foreign language? What suggestions would they give to teachers and to other learners?

Following are some of the responses from the interviews. For the purpose of analysis, I categorize them into four entries: personal background, motivation, thoughts and feelings, and learning experiences.

Personal Background

Subject A. My hometown is in the countryside. It is a very remote area and the living standard is quite low. All the people in my village are farmers and few received high school education. There is an elementary school in the village, but the nearest middle school is ten miles away. Bicycles are the major means of transportation. My father had four years of schooling and my mother had never been to school all her life. In fact, I am the first person ever to attend college in the village. So my parents are very proud of me and the whole village has a very high expectation of me. Even though my parents have not had much education themselves, they believe in the true value of education. They always remind me that "To be a scholar is to be the top of society." They do not know what English is and what good English will do me. In their mind, any kind of education will be beneficial.

Subject B. My father is a college professor, and my mother teaches in a middle school. Books and magazines are everywhere in the house. My parents read to me a lot during my childhood. My parents suffered a lot during the Cultural Revolution as most of the intellectuals did. However, their value system has never changed. They want me to major in English because they hope that I will continue my post graduate studies abroad. My sister is in high school now. She is working hard in English. She wants to become an English teacher like our mother.

Subject C. My parents work in a government organization. My father is a cadre and my mother is a secretary. My father joined the army when he was only 16, and he had never been to school before that. He learned to read and write a little bit in Chinese in the army. He became a cadre after he left the army 40 years ago. He says he is tired of

being a politician. He wants us four children to get the best education possible. He sends us to the top schools in the city where we live. We have private tutors come to our home in the evening. On Sundays we go to learn painting, drawing, and how to play musical instruments. At home he sets out rules for us as if we were his soldiers. He does not want us to waste a single minute. My parents are very pleased to see us four brother and sisters going to colleges and universities.

Subject D. I worked in a factory in China before coming to the United States. I wasted my valuable time in junior and senior high as that time was the Great Cultural Revolution. Instead of academic studies, we learned to write revolutionary slogans and critical reports. We were re-educated by workers and peasants through much physical labor in the factories and on the farms. The English we learned at that time was limited to the alphabet and a few political slogans. The English teachers were labeled "the running dogs of the capitalists" by the Red Guards, and no student wanted to learn the language of the reactionaries. Now that I am in America, I see the importance of English. How I wish I had learned to speak English when I was young. Now I am learning English in an adult school and I find it very difficult.

The responses of those Chinese show that the traditional Chinese value system is deeply implanted in Chinese people's mind. Regardless of their social positions and their educational background, all Chinese regard education highly. Smith is right when he says that the Chinese have "a strong, almost fanatical emphasis on education and achievement for the children" (Smith, 1991, p.39). For over two thousand years, education has been the only hope for ordinary Chinese people to change their social status. Only those who passed the Civil Examinations had the opportunity of becoming civil officials. The case is still pretty much the same in modern China. It is difficult for people with no or little education to find a well-paying job. Naturally, college graduates will have their "Iron bowls"--- secure and fairly well-paid jobs. Nevertheless, in today's over-populated China, only 10% of the best high school graduates can get into colleges or universities. Parents are very much concerned about their children's future, and they try every means to help their children in their studies in hoping that their children may get into one of the universities. In this respect, students with well-educated parents are in a better position than those from workers' and peasants' families. The former can get more academic help and support from their parents. Similarly, urban students have the privilege of enjoying

better educational equipment and academic resources while country students often have high school graduates as their teachers. That is why each year's college enrollments find more urban students than country students.

Motivation

Subject E. I do not want to disappoint my parents. They want me to do well in all courses and make it to university. They work very hard to support me. It is not easy for them because their income is very limited. I need to study hard and get into a university. After graduation I can find a good job and then take care of my parents.

Subject B. English was my major at college. My parents suggested that I take English because that would help me if I could go on with my graduate studies abroad. The competition for going to graduate school in China is extremely high. Besides, I think it is better to learn English in an English speaking country. I can interact with native speakers and experience their life and culture. I want to learn the real stuff not the dead English from the books.

Subject F. Even though English was not my major, I knew it would be helpful for me in my future work. I was in the Master of Business Management program with a specialty in foreign trade. English was a necessity in doing business with other countries. I knew if my English was good I could expand our business abroad instead of waiting for foreign investors to come to our country. After graduation I was assigned to work in an import and export cooperation, and now the company has sent me here to start a new branch.

Subject G. To be frank, I did not like English in middle and high school. It was too hard for me. I spent more time on English than I did on any other subject. In spite of that, I could never make As. However, I had to keep on working hard on it because English was one of the subjects to be tested in the National College Entrance Examination. If my score in English was too low, my overall scores for the Entrance Examination would be affected. I was lucky to get enrolled in a university. Every non-English major in the university had to take English for two years. That was a heavy burden for me. My goal was to get a passing grade for English. That is why my English is so poor now. I would have worked harder in English if I had known that I had the opportunity to come to the United States.

It is true that Chinese students' motivation for learning English varies from individual to individual. However, there is one interesting fact that I found in my interviews, that almost all of the Chinese students are instrumentally motivated. To please their parents, to get a good job, to fulfill a course requirement, and to work or

study abroad are some of the most common English learning motivations found among Chinese students.

Learning English to please one's parents may sound strange and hard to understand to Americans. However, when they come to know the Chinese people a little better and learn something about their tradition and ideology, it will not be so hard for Americans to understand the Chinese students. In present day China, the teaching of being submissive and loyal to one's parents is still considered an important value for the young people. They will do as told by their parents to show respect for their parents. Many young people think it their duty to take care of their parents when they are old and retired.

Learning English to fulfill course requirements is also prevalent among Chinese students. English is a mandatory course in middle school, high school, and college. To advance to the next level of education, students have to get good grades for all required courses. A low grade in any of the courses may lead to the termination of one's education. The transition from middle school to high school and from high school to college is crucial to each student. Only 25 percent of the middle school graduates can go on to high schools and less than 10 percents of the high school graduates get admitted into colleges. Each student has to work hard in his or her studies or he or she will be kept out of school.

China's open door policy since 1986 provides people the opportunity to work and study in America, Australia, Canada, England, and other English speaking countries. The rapid development of the economy in the past decade or so has attracted many foreign investments to China, and at the same time many companies in China are expanding their business into other countries around the world. Such political and economic changes create more high-paying job for those who know English. More and more young people

in China are becoming involved in English learning programs in the hope that some day they may go to work or study in other developed countries.

English Learning Experiences

Subject H. During my first year at college, I spent most of my time practicing my pronunciation and speaking while other students were memorizing grammar rules, analyzing each text by breaking it into words and phrases. In my mind, the purpose of learning a language was for communication. So I thought to myself that listening and speaking were more important to me because I was weak in those areas at that time. I nearly failed in my test at the end of the first semester. Most of the questions in the test were related to grammar. From that time on, I knew I had to work hard on grammar in order to get a good grade in the test.

Subject I. I was a shy student and seldom talked in class. One day in class the teacher asked the students to translate a sentence from Chinese to English orally. At first the teacher called on a few students but they all shook their heads. Then the teacher turned to the whole class. Still no one said anything. The class was baffled by one of the words in the sentence. I knew the word, but I did not have the courage to speak out. The teacher waited for a while and was about to tell the class the answer, but then he heard that word came out of my mouth. The teacher was very pleased and he lost no time praising me. He said I was a quiet person but whatever I said, it was always to the point. All the students turned and stared at me, and I flushed to the roots of my hair. Inside I felt happy and encouraged. From that time on, I had more confidence in myself. Many years have passed since then, but I still remember that instance clearly.

Subject J. I liked English and wanted to learn it well. Nonetheless, for a year or so at high school I turned away from it and did not want to go to any English class. My high school English teacher's behavior sickened me. Many other students in my class felt the same way. The teacher gave special favor to one of the girl students in the class. He praised her and asked her questions all the time as if the rest of the students in the class were idiots. When the girl said something, he would smile at her and say that her pronunciation was clear and affectionate. He would either frown or remark impatiently at other students whenever it was their turn to speak. His English was better than most of the other English teachers at our school, but no students wanted to take his course.

Subject K. It was hard to learn English in China because students did not have much chance to interact with native speakers. When I was in the college, students in my class tried various ways to create a better learning environment for ourselves. One of the methods we used was to set up rules for ourselves. Everyone agreed that no Chinese was allowed in class. We had to speak English to each other. Whoever broke the rule had to pay a small fine. This method seemed to work nicely for us. We soon formed the habit of speaking English to each other in the classroom. Some students adopted the regulation for their dormitory so they would have to speak English in their rooms. In this way,

students not only learned how to speak English, they also trained themselves in self-discipline and self-monitoring over their learning and behaviors. It was a pity that the practice was carried on for only a year or so. When we got to the third and fourth year at college, we were more involved in reading and writing and we spoke English less and less.

Subject L. I was a country girl, and you can tell how happy I was when I entered the gate of our university. I was stumbling in my Chinese, not to mention English. Seeing that other students could talk with the foreign teacher in English fluently, I had a sense of inferiority. Luckily my English teacher was very kind and full of patience. Whenever she had time she would come to sit by my side and teach me how to pronounce each letter and each phoneme in English correctly. Some of the sounds in English do not exist in my native language, so it took me a long time to pronounce some of those sounds correctly. The teacher showed me where to position my tongue and how to shape my mouth to produce each phoneme. She told me that she was always available for me and encouraged me by pointing out any progress I made in my English.

Subject M. My native language is Cantonese. I attended a university in Beijing and majored in English language and literature. There were two other students who also spoke Cantonese. When we were together, we would speak Cantonese to each other. Speaking our native language gave us a sense of friendliness and security. However, one day our English teacher suggested that we use no Cantonese at school. He said it would be helpful for our pronunciation in English if we did not speak Cantonese. He meant that some of the pronunciations and intonations in Cantonese might have a negative effect on our English. The teacher's advice sounded ridiculous. We knew that many Cantonese speaking people spoke native-like English. Nevertheless, it was pointless for us to object to the teacher's advice openly. We kept on speaking Cantonese, but not in front of the English teacher.

Subject N. I miss my college English teacher so much. He speaks good English. He is very knowledgeable and cultivated in Ancient Chinese, Chinese literature, and Western civilization. He is good at calligraphy, too. When he was teaching, various kinds of information came out of his witty head and flew into the students' thirsty mind. His class was both interesting and informative. Influenced by him, I became interested in Chinese and Western Literature. In my spare time I like to read literature books, either in Chinese or in English. My reading, in turn, has helped my studies a great deal.

Subject O. It was sad that some teachers had a bias against certain students. You could tell at the beginning of the semester what kind of grade you would get from your teacher. In the first few days of your encounter, the teacher tried to collect information regarding your personality, your educational background, your ethnicity, your learning preferences, your English proficiency, etc. Shortly after that, an opinion about you was formed in the teacher's mind. This set opinion was going to influence the teacher's judgment on your progress, including the checking of your homework, your test, and your daily performances. You could tell by instinct which teacher was going to treat you fairly and which was not. I was a minority student, and I spoke Chinese with an accent. One of my college teachers treated me differently from the other students. I sensed it from the way he talked to me and the comments he made on my homework. I took three of his

classes, and the best grade I had was B, while my grades from other teachers were A or A minus.

Subject P. I felt uncomfortable speaking in front of the class when all the students were looking at you. How embarrassing it was to make mistakes before the whole class. I was very scared to be called on by the teacher if I was not ready for the question. In that case, I would lower my head or try to avoid eye contact with the teacher. The teacher could tell which students were ready for a question by glancing at them. To reduce students' anxiety, a teacher could ask those students who seemed to be ready to answer the teacher's question. At the same time, a teacher could make the question easier for the students to make them feel more confident about themselves. I could not think properly when I felt uneasy.

Many interesting facts about Chinese students' learning habits, student-teacher relationships, and learners' joy and sorrow in their English learning are revealed in these interviews. It is impossible to collect such valuable information through a questionnaire. From the above responses it is obvious that the student-teacher relationship is an important issue for the Chinese students. The conflict between Chinese tradition and modern learning theories puzzles the Chinese students. It is the tradition in China that students respect their teachers and be submissive to their teachers. Modern learning theories emphasize the importance of independent learning and the importance of developing learners' critical thinking skills. Today, learned and experienced teachers still earn the respect of their students. However, the teachers' sovereign position is getting shaky as the Chinese students come into contact with the current theories in language learning and teaching.

At the same time, the traditional grammar-translation teaching method is also facing the challenge of other approaches in language teaching. At times the audio-lingual approach, the communicative competence approach, and the cognitive learning approach won the favor of many English teachers and students in China. The newly developed EFL syllabus in recent years attempts to break away from the traditional grammar-translation teaching method and emphasizes developing learners' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. The syllabi encourage teachers to adopt the communicative

approach in their teaching in order to develop students' communicative competence (Sun & Sun, 1989). In fact, many institutions are working at different projects to provide learning and pedagogic support for the communicative approach in China. CECL (Communicative English for Chinese Learners), developed by two Canadian teachers and a Chinese teacher at Guangzhou Foreign Language Institute, is one of them.

Yet, the traditional teaching method has taken root in the head of many Chinese educators, and it is impossible to abandon the traditional teaching method completely in a short period of time. Therefore, the implementation of the communicative approach has come across many obstacles. Traditional teachers cast doubt on the feasibility of the communicative approach in China, in which students learn a language through using it. Traditional teaching places form before use. Students learn the elements of a language such as its pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar rules before they begin to use the language. Communicative teaching, however, tries to expose students to various materials in the target language. Through such extensive exposure students learn to handle different language situations. Traditional teachers, on the other hand, worry that the students cannot digest such a great amount of language data. The objective of the communicative approach is to develop student's communication skills. To acquire these skills, students are given various tasks to perform which involve discussion, interviews, and other interactive activities. Traditional teachers think such teaching lacks a focal point. In traditional teaching the teacher centers his of her teaching around a few language points (either word usage or grammar regulations) in each lesson. Students drill on these few language points and memorize them.

Another aspect of the communicative approach is that students take a central role in learning. The course syllabus and the teacher's instruction are based on the needs of the students. In contrast to this, in traditional teaching, the course design is determined by the content and the structure of the text. The teacher takes up almost all of the class

time giving lectures while the students play a passive role. Teachers may feel somewhat guilty as their roles shift from an information provider, a master in traditional teaching, to a guide, a facilitator in the communicative approach. Many students in China today are not ready to initiate an active role in their learning yet. Both Chinese teachers and students need some time to adjust in their new roles in EFL learning and teaching (Li, 1990).

Meanwhile, the traditional ideology and value system still have a strong influence on Chinese people's thinking and behavior. In students' minds, teachers are still their "master," their source of knowledge and direction, and their models of virtue. Teacher's words have a stronger impact on the students than what their parents say. In this sense, a teacher's classroom behavior and attitude towards students means a lot to the students. It will surely hurt the students' feelings if the teacher does not understand the students' state of mind, or show empathy for them. They are emotional beings. They need support and encouragement from those they respect. If they feel they are being ignored or looked down upon, they will be sad or even angry. They may not show their dissatisfaction with their studies openly. However, a teacher can tell that a student is undergoing some emotional disturbance if there are signs of lack of cooperation in class activities and avoidance of the teacher's help.

4. REFLECTIONS

My survey on the characteristics of Chinese students in EFL learning may not be very comprehensive. However, it reveals some of the feelings Chinese students have and the strategies they use in EFL learning. Generally, Chinese students are shy, sensitive, and introverted. Influenced by their first language learning experience, they are visual-oriented and test-oriented. Memorization, grammar-translation, and a strong emphasis on the correction of mistakes are some of the styles found in Chinese students. Following are some reflections I think might be interesting to EFL teachers having contact with Chinese students.

Teachers in General

In Chinese students' mind, a teacher's status is that of high authority. The teacher is a learned person and their knowledge provider. Students are expected to pay respect to their teachers. On the other hand, teachers ought to show empathy for the students. It is helpful when the teacher gets to know each student well and breaks the barrier between them. When the students know that their teacher cares for them and is willing to help them in their studies they will respect the teacher even more. They will then be willing to cooperate with the teacher in various class activities.

As we know, human emotion is a complex psychological activity, so often it is not easy to find out what is going on in the students' mind. A teacher needs to be patient and to have keen observation skills to detect the changes in students' classroom behaviors. Normally, Chinese students are inverted and shy. They do not like to show their feelings,

not to mention sharing their state of mind with their teachers. So it is imperative that the teacher get information about the students' personality, their educational background, and their learning styles. In that case, any slight change in the students' tone, or something unusual they describe in their journals will help the teacher to understand what is going on in their mind.

Then a teacher needs to treat each student equally. Some students may not care much if the teacher shows favor to a few particular students. Others may find it hard to endure, especially those students who are sensitive. They may have a sense of being ignored or being looked down upon by the teacher. Such feelings will affect their attitude towards their studies and even turn them away from the English class.

Chinese Teachers of English

Many Chinese teachers of English have been trained in China with traditional teaching methods. Reading-grammar-translation, knowledge-imparting, intensive reading, teacher-centered, and learning from textbooks are some of the methodologies frequently used by Chinese teachers in their teaching. It would be nice if Chinese teachers of English could adopt some current approaches and materials in their teaching. There is nothing wrong with the grammar-translation approach for certain purposes. Using Chinese in teaching is helpful sometimes, especially for beginning level Chinese learners. However, students need more time for oral practice. They need to develop their communicative skills. Instead of lecturing all the time, teachers can divide students into small groups and give them assignments for group discussion.

At the same time, knowledge-imparting learning should be replaced by a cognitive learning process. Traditional teaching trains students to view language phenomena outside of a social context. Besides teaching students English vocabulary and grammar rules, teachers need to teach students how to relate language forms to communicative

functions and to social context. In this way, students' skimming, scanning, and predictive reading skills will be improved. In turn, these skills will help to improve students' reading speed and comprehension.

Traditional teaching does not emphasize the importance of creative thinking. Students learn their lessons by memorizing and imitating. Teachers should develop the students' creative ability by using their knowledge in new language situations. To achieve this goal, the curriculum and instruction should be student-centered. Instead of giving students step by step instruction, teachers ought to let students go through the process of learning by themselves. Teachers could try to involve students actively in communicative activities to improve their reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. In their teaching, Chinese teachers of English need to speak English as much as possible and use Chinese whenever necessary.

Foreign Teachers

Since 1976, more and more foreign teachers have gone to teach in China. With excitement and great ambition they enter this nation which is full of mysteries. More mysteries are waiting for them the moment they step into the classroom. The entire education system is different from their expectation. Everything is new to them: the students, the teaching staff, the course syllabus, and the expectation of the school administration. They do not know where to begin. Some foreign teachers are eager to try out their up-to-date teaching methods and have Chinese students use the current materials they bring in. To their disappointment, Chinese students do not seem to show much enthusiasm for their advanced methods. Those teachers need to realize that traditional teaching is rooted deeply in the minds of Chinese students. It is not possible to have Chinese students abandon their learning habits. A more acceptable way is to turn their learning habits into good use. Chinese students like to spend large amounts of time in

their studies. It will benefit the students greatly if teachers can design some culture-related materials for students' private studies. Another way is to assign Chinese students more out-of -class group projects to reinforce their cooperative learning.

Even though Chinese students are conservative and more comfortable with traditional learning styles, that does not mean they are not open to new methods and materials. In fact, Chinese students are eager to try out the new learning strategies introduced by their foreign teachers. In their teaching, foreign teachers need to take their students' English proficiency, their personality, and their existing knowledge into consideration. Chinese students are reserved and quiet, so teachers have to implement some activities to encourage students to speak out in class. Then teachers have to be aware of the difference between Chinese and English. Consciously or unconsciously, Chinese students will use their L1 learning methods in their English learning. If possible, teachers may inform their students what methods are helpful for them and what are not. Again, it will help foreign teachers to understand their Chinese students better if they know something about traditional teaching methods (Sun & Sun, 1989).

According to a study conducted by Judith Johnson (1989) on Chinese student's evaluation of foreign teachers, Chinese students find that foreign teachers have many advantages over Chinese teachers. They allow more time for student's self study, they encourage student to speak in class, and they have more variety in their teaching. On the other hand, Chinese teachers have better control of their teaching, they explain their points clearly, and they have a good grasp of grammar. Johnson's study finds out that Chinese students think some foreign teachers need to be careful about their teaching manner. Chinese students have a high respect for their teachers. They will not regard it as proper behavior for a teacher to act too casually in class.

In conclusion, I think something needs to be done about the education system in China. First of all, the design of courses and course syllabi needs to be in accordance with students' natural learning process. More time should be given to productive courses such as extensive reading, listening, and speaking. In their teaching, teachers should allow more time for students' questions and group discussion.

Then there is the weakness in the current recruitment program. The government should encourage graduates who are highly proficient in English to join the teaching profession by increasing their social status and salary. In recruiting foreign teachers, the government needs to select those with teaching experience. At the same time, the government should provide them with an opportunity to learn something about the Chinese culture.

Finally, the government should give teachers more freedom in their teaching and in developing their curricula. Only then can teachers give full play to their potential.

NOTES

1. U.K., U.S.A., Germany, France, Russia, Japan, Italy, and Austria

2. Anti-corruption, waste, and bureaucracy

3. Anti bribery, tax-evasion, theft of state property, cheating, and stealing of economic information

4. (sangang wuchang 三綱五常): The Three Bounds: ruler guides object, father guides son, and husband guides wife; The Five Virtues: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity

5. See example pages from Chinese elementary texts in Appendix C.

6. The official Chinese dialect based on Beijing Dialect

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHINESE STUDENTS' CHARACTERISTICS AND LEARNING STYLES
中國學生之特性及學習方法調查

Please tell something about yourself (請告知一些你的情況)：
Sex(性別) ____ Male(男) ____ Female(女)
Age(年齡): ____ Below 20(20歲以下) ____ 21-35(21-35歲之間)
____ 36-45(36-45歲之間) ____ Above 45(45歲以上)
How long in the U.S.(到美時間): _____ years(幾年) _____ months(幾個月)

Note: Dear friend, while answering the following questions, please refer to your past English learning experiences with your English teachers (either Chinese or foreign) back in China/Taiwan. Your help will be of great value to me. Thanks.(親愛的朋友,請你用過去在大陸或台灣學英語的經歷來回答下面的問題,謝謝)

A: Directions: Circle the extent to which you agree with each of the following:
(根據你的情況在以下各問題劃圈)

	Low(低)				High(高)
1. In class when the teacher asks you a question in English and you are not sure of the answer, you feel:(上課時老師用英語提問但你不知怎麼回答時, 你會感到)					
comfortable(自在)	1	2	3	4	5
annoyed(不高興)	1	2	3	4	5
embarrassed(難為情)	1	2	3	4	5
2. What qualities do you like in a teacher?(你喜歡老師的甚麼素質?)					
be able to answer students' questions(能回答學生的問題)	1	2	3	4	5
encourage students to ask questions(鼓勵學生提問)	1	2	3	4	5
be nice to students(善待學生)	1	2	3	4	5
be strict with students(嚴格要求學生)	1	2	3	4	5
be concerned about students' feelings(體恤學生感情)	1	2	3	4	5
be serious about his/her teaching(教學態度嚴謹)	1	2	3	4	5
3. To you, what degree of anxiety might the following activities cause? (下列各活動對你會產生多大的緊張成度?)					
asking the teacher for clarification of an explanation(讓老師作進一步解釋)	1	2	3	4	5
asking the teacher for the meaning of a word (問老師某一單詞的意思)	1	2	3	4	5
being called on to answer a question when you don't know the answer (當你不知道問題的答案時被提問)	1	2	3	4	5
being called on to answer a question when you know the answer (當你知道問題的答案時被提問)	1	2	3	4	5
being called on to read aloud from the text(在堂上大聲朗讀課文)	1	2	3	4	5
making a mistake in speaking in class(在堂上講話時出錯)	1	2	3	4	5

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making a mistake when you speak to the teacher individually
(跟老師單獨交談時出錯) 1 2 3 4 5
doing a dialogue in pairs(兩人對話) 1 2 3 4 5
having a discussion in small groups(小組討論) 1 2 3 4 5
acting out a story in class(在堂上表演) 1 2 3 4 5
taking a multiple choice test(做選擇題測驗) 1 2 3 4 5
taking an oral test(口試) 1 2 3 4 5

4. To what degree have you been influenced by your teachers in the following?(你的老師在以下各方面對你有多大影響?)
learning habit(學習習慣) 1 2 3 4 5
confidence in learning English(對學英語的信心) 1 2 3 4 5
attitudes towards English learning(對學英語的態度) 1 2 3 4 5
attitudes towards other people(待人態度) 1 2 3 4 5
world view(世界觀) 1 2 3 4 5

5. When the teacher corrects your error in pronunciation in class, you think(當老師在堂上糾正你的發音時你認為)
that is normal(這是正常的) 1 2 3 4 5
the teacher is not being kind to you(老師不善待你) 1 2 3 4 5
you look silly in front of others(你當眾出丑) 1 2 3 4 5

6. What do you think of English?(你覺得英語怎麼樣?)
It is easy and I am sure I can learn it well. (很容易我一定能學好) 1 2 3 4 5
It is not easy but I can learn it well(雖不容易但我會學好的) 1 2 3 4 5
It is too hard for me (太難了我學不來) 1 2 3 4 5
I am not sure if I can learn it well.(能否學好我說不准) 1 2 3 4 5

7. What are your learning preferences?(你較喜歡哪些學習方式?)
To remember a new word, I must see it.(見過的生詞我才能記住) 1 2 3 4 5
To remember a new word, I must hear it many times.
(生詞我要多次聽過才能記住) 1 2 3 4 5
In English class, I like TV and pictures the best.
(上英語課時我最喜歡電視及圖片) 1 2 3 4 5
In English class, I like conversation the best.
(上英語課時我最喜歡會話) 1 2 3 4 5
In English class, I like writing the best.
(上英語課時我最喜歡寫作) 1 2 3 4 5
I do best if I study with one or two friends.
(我跟一兩個朋友一起學習時效果最好) 1 2 3 4 5
I do best if I study by myself in a quiet place.
(我單獨一人在安靜環境下學習時效果最好) 1 2 3 4 5

8. You like to interact with your teacher in English
(你甚麼情況下喜歡用英語跟老師交談)
individually in class(在堂上單獨地) 1 2 3 4 5
individually out of class(課后單獨一人時) 1 2 3 4 5
in a classroom setting(在堂上) 1 2 3 4 5
in a small group in class(在小組里) 1 2 3 4 5
when accompanied by your friends out of class
(課后有朋友相陪時) 1 2 3 4 5

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9. If you have a question regarding the teacher's instructions or are unsure of an explanation, you would:
(如果你對老師的講解有疑惑或有疑問時, 你會)

ask the teacher immediately(馬上問老師)	1	2	3	4	5
ask the teacher after class(課后才去問老師)	1	2	3	4	5
ask other students but not the teacher (問其他同學而不問老師)	1	2	3	4	5
try to solve the problem by yourself (想法自己解決疑難)	1	2	3	4	5

10. If you are asked to speak aloud in class and you make a mistake in the verb tense, you think it would be better if the teacher(假如你在堂上說英語時用錯了時態,你覺得老師最好是)

corrects your mistake immediately in class (在堂上立刻糾正你的錯誤)	1	2	3	4	5
corrects your mistake after class(課后才糾正你的錯誤)	1	2	3	4	5
corrects your mistake directly(直接地指出你的錯誤)	1	2	3	4	5
corrects your mistake indirectly(間接地指出你的錯誤)	1	2	3	4	5

11. Which of the following is true of you?(你屬于以下哪種情況?)

I like to speak English in class.(我喜歡在堂上講英語)	1	2	3	4	5
I feel shy when I speak in class.(在堂上講英語我會害羞)	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy reading books assigned by the teacher. (我喜歡閱讀老師布置的書)	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy reading books of my interest. (我喜歡閱讀我感興趣的書)	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy listening to the teacher in class. (我喜歡聽老師講課)	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy listening to the radio and watching TV in class. (上課時我喜歡聽收音機和看電視)	1	2	3	4	5
I prefer more time for group discussion in class. (上課時我喜歡多點時間來作小組討論)	1	2	3	4	5

12. In your class, there are three or four students who speak very good English. The teacher always seems to ask them questions, call on them to speak, and allow them to do classroom errands. As an average student, would you feel:
(在你班上有兩三位同學英語說得很好, 老師似乎總是提問他們,讓他們發言以及做各種差事. 作為一個普通學生, 你是否會感到)

relieved because the teacher does not call on you. (放松因為老師沒有叫到你)	1	2	3	4	5
happy for them because they are getting extra attention. (為他們感到高興因為他們較受重視)	1	2	3	4	5
jealous of them(嫉妒他們)	1	2	3	4	5
angry at the teacher for playing favorites. (因老師偏心而生老師的氣)	1	2	3	4	5

13. In class when you say something in English but the teacher thinks you have said something else, you feel:
(在堂上當你用英語說某事而老師誤認為你在說其它東西時，你感到)

frustrated(不快)	1	2	3	4	5
as if the teacher is finding fault with you on purpose(似乎老師在故意找你的碴)	1	2	3	4	5
you will not dare to speak in class again (你再也不敢在堂上說話了)	1	2	3	4	5
that this is normal(這是正常的)	1	2	3	4	5
as if nothing has happened(似乎沒事一樣)	1	2	3	4	5

14. After each test, you(每次測試之后，你)

want to forget about it(想將其忘掉)	1	2	3	4	5
are eager to find out your score in the test (急于知道測試的分數)	1	2	3	4	5
are eager to find out your friends' score in the test(急于知道你的朋友的測試分數)	1	2	3	4	5
are anxious to know who did better than you in the test(急于知道誰考得比你更好)	1	2	3	4	5
are anxious to know who did worse than you in the test(急于知道誰考得比你更差)	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW

When did you begin learning English?

How long have you been learning English?

Why did you choose to learn English?

How many years of schooling did your parents have?

Is there anybody in your family who also has learned English?

What is the expectation of your parents?

What were you doing before coming to the United States?

Did you use English much at work?

Who has had a greater impact on you, your parents or your teachers? How?

Can you share some of your English learning experiences?

How do you like English?

How did you feel when you were in an English class?

Tell me about one of your unforgetable moments in English learning?

Did you like your English teacher? Why?

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE LESSONS FROM CHINESE PREMIER TEXT

5

dà
大
mǔ jī dà
xiǎo
小
xiǎo jī xiǎo

duō
多
yáng duō
shǎo
少
niú shǎo

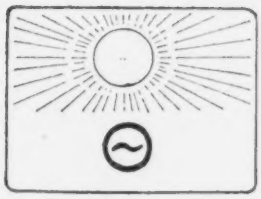
7

大	小	多	少

一ナ大 丨小小 ノクタ多 小少

• 30 •

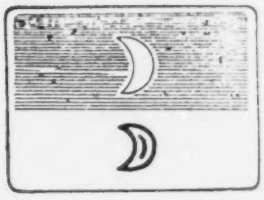
6



rì

日

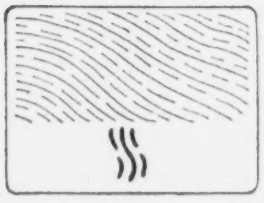
tài yáng



yuè

月

yuè liang



shuǐ

水

hé shuǐ

huǒ

火

huǒ bǎ

7

yún 云　　diàn 电

wū yún shǎn diàn

fēng 风

guā fēng

yǔ 雨

xià yǔ

云 电 风 雨

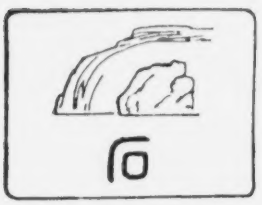
一 二 云 云　丨 冂 日 电　丿 几 凡 风 风　一 冂 冂 雨 雨

8

shān

山

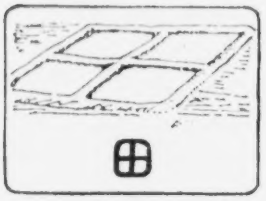
gāo shān



shí

石

shí tou



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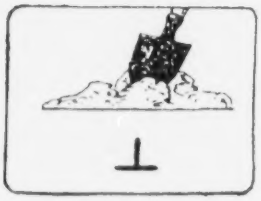
田

shuǐ tián



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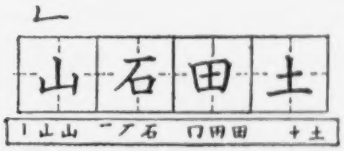

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(Source: People's Educational Publisher, 1991, 30-33.)